

IOWA BIRD LIFE

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



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FRONT COVER: Prothonotary Warbler at Ledges State Park, Boone Co., 21 May 2004. Photograph by Richard Stilwell, West Des Moines, IA.

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Meet Two Iowa Birders — Beth and Mark Proescholdt

Robert I. Cecil



Beth Proescholdt



Mark Proescholdt

There are few faces among Iowa birders that are as familiar and as welcomed as those of Beth and Mark Proescholdt. Regular members of the IOU since 1981 and 1983, respectively, this mother-son team has provided invaluable service to the IOU, Iowa birders, and the greater knowledge of Iowa ornithology. Ironically, the unassuming nature of this birding pair prevented for years this article from being written. In this case at least, their modesty served us well, enabling us to record even more of their ongoing contributions.

Beth Check was born in Madrid, IA and attended college at UNI. Her early career of teaching elementary school came to an end when she married Carl Proescholdt and chose to stay home to rear the first of her five children. After living for a time in Illinois, they moved to Liscomb in 1953 where they continue to reside today. Beth actually belonged to the IOU in the early 1960s, but the demands of motherhood took her attentions elsewhere.

Although Mark has been the most passionate in following his mother into birding, Beth describes all four of her sons (Terry, Mark, Kevin, and Kim) as birders, and notes that her daughter Kathleen also greatly enjoys the outdoors. Beth's husband is supportive of their birding if not long-suffering, but is happy to stay home and keep things moving along there. Beth's initial interest in birding and the outdoors began relatively late in life, after she had moved to Liscomb. She recalls going out in the back yard one day and being astonished at the numbers of birds and the chorus of their songs, adding that she could identify about three species at the time. She bought a Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* and began to identify them. The kids were always outdoors — playing

ball in the back yard, building tree houses, fishing, hunting the woods and creek, tromping around, ice-skating on the river and gravel pit, star-gazing — just loving the outdoors. Their home reflected their interests, with pet animals, jars of bugs, snakes, and other things of the outdoors brought indoors. At least one relative was reluctant to visit, concerned that something may have "gotten loose." Beth's affection for the serenity of her yard and garden continues, and each spring she awaits the arrival of the Hermit Thrushes to "bless her flowerbeds."

Mark, the second of the five children, was born in Princeton, Illinois in 1951 before moving to Liscomb where he continues to live with his parents. Mark's birding began at the

age of six, chronicling his first sightings in a 15¢ spiral notebook that he still has. Using 3x binoculars, his list begins with Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, and Titmouse. The notebook contains his lists for several more years, including sightings from both his yard and trips with his parents. Like three of his siblings, Mark is a graduate of Iowa State University, holding a degree in Outdoor Recreation Resources. During his college stint, he took ornithology under Milt Weller, Jim Dinsmore's predecessor. Mark now works for the 267 Area Education Agency as driver/courier. An important benefit of his job is that it requires Mark to drive around a multi-county region daily throughout the school year. As might be expected, he sometimes sees noteworthy birds on these trips or during lunch breaks at area parks and lakes. Another important benefit of his job is that it leaves summers open for Beth and him to travel about the state and country on birding trips. Mark's living at home has worked out well for both him and his mother; they reciprocate as skilled birding partners, and can bird together any day they wish. Many of Iowa's birders have benefited from Mark's kindness. He always has a supply of sweatshirts, gloves, stocking caps, and snacks in his car in case someone needs something, and many contributors to *Iowa Bird Life (IBL)* have received postcards from him, which he presumably buys by the stack, thanking them for their articles and photos.

For Beth and Mark, birding begins at home, where Mark has 145 species on his yard list and Beth has "a few more." Beth's best yard bird was a male Hooded Warbler, while Mark counts among his best: fly-over Tundra Swans, Black-throated Blue Warbler, two Connecticut Warblers, a Yellow-breasted Chat, a Long-eared Owl, and, of course, a White-winged Dove this summer. Their almost nonstop birding has had some enviable results. For example, Mark found Iowa's first MacGillivray's Warbler on 2 June 1995 at Eagle City in Hardin County (Proescholdt 1997). Although very difficult to distinguish from other *Oporornis* warblers, Mark's legendary skill with warblers left little doubt about the identification. Beth's first state record was less of an identification problem. While birding on 12 May 2001 in Marshall County, she was treated to an adult male Painted Bunting (Proescholdt 2002), although she notes that her most enjoyable birding experience that year was also that spring, watching two flocks of American Golden Plovers at Colo Ponds talking to each other.

Beth and Mark's birding has taken them throughout Iowa. Mark was inspired by the late Pete Petersen's suggestion that Iowa birders begin doing county lists. Mark responded with enthusiasm, eventually establishing a list for each of Iowa's 99 counties. The spring *IOU News* county listing totals has Mark reporting for every county, ranging from 268 species in his home county Marshall to 50 in Audubon, Cass, Jefferson, and Page counties. He points out that county listing is not only enjoyable, but acquaints him with many out-of-the-way and under-explored birding locations. Beth is not as complete with her county lists and is more than happy to ride around with Mark, but does manage to edge him out in Marshall County with her total of 269 species. Beth and Mark are also among the leaders of Iowa listers, having seen 354 and 362 species respectively, placing them in seventh and fifth place. Mark's persistence and vigilance has produced many Iowa rarities and unusual observations. In Van Buren County, while driving down a gravel road, he picked out the almost inaudible song of a Henslow's Sparrow, alerting Iowans to a new breeding location for this rare species. His observation has led birders to seek and to find it in many other southern Iowa sites. Since his membership began, Mark has been *IBL*'s most consistent seasonal field reports contributor, submitting a report every season since his first in 1983. His contributions to the greater knowledge of Iowa's avifauna cannot be over-estimated.

Like Mark, Beth has also been a loyal contributor, with her first submission in 1961. Iowa's Field Reports editors have appreciated the completeness and accuracy of the reports from this birding team.

Their quest for new birds and new outdoor experiences has not been limited to Iowa. Their travels have taken them to 48 states, missing only Hawaii and Rhode Island. They count among their favorite locations Alaska, southeast Arizona, northern Minnesota, Maine, and the Pacific Northwest where, in addition to Wandering Tattlers, Surfbirds, Mew Gulls, and Tufted Puffins, Beth was thrilled to observe an intrepid Black Oystercatcher chasing away a Peregrine Falcon. Beth's special affinity for Maine is revealed in photos sprinkled around her home.

Perhaps more impressive than their birding achievements are their contributions to IOU. Beth was a member of the board of directors from 1983–1986 and Mark served from 1989 to 1993. Mark also served as the IOU president from 1997–2001, and on the IOU Records Committee from 1990–1993. Their active participation in IOU has been reflected in their attendance at meetings — they estimate that over the last 20 plus years, they have missed perhaps two meetings apiece. Both have served tirelessly in other ways, from leading field trips to repeated appointments on nominating committees to regular involvement in Christmas Bird Counts. Over the years, they have also submitted numerous notes and articles to IBL. Beth has focused on raptors, while Mark has written about his observations of Red Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, Laughing Gull, Black-necked Stilt, White-winged Dove, Black-headed Gull, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. A little-known fact is that Beth's first published article was in the prestigious ornithological journal, *The Wilson Bulletin*. The March 1961 issue carried her observations of "Weather and Early Spring Migration in Iowa" (Proescholdt 1961).

Among all of her accomplishments and contributions, Beth is perhaps best known for the Grammer Grove Hawk Watch. Returning from canoeing in the Boundary Waters area of northern Minnesota, Beth decided to check out the hawk watch at Duluth's Hawk Ridge. She was impressed not only with the passing raptors, but the skill with which the observers could identify almost invisibly distant birds. Pete Dunne's *Hawks in Flight* became their hawk-watching bible. Beth and Mark noticed that one of their favorite birding spots, Grammer Grove County Park just three miles from their home, also had some migrating raptors, and decided to try a hawk watch there. Fourteen years later, Beth is still at it, often by herself, and sends in a detailed report to the Hawk Migration Association of North America. Last year, for example, 3,046 birds of 17 species were tallied between 30 August and 21 December, and included such species as Mississippi Kite (1), Red-shouldered Hawk (10), Golden Eagle (3), and Northern Goshawk (2). Many Iowa birders have gathered here with Beth and Mark (if he hasn't wandered off in search of passerines) to enjoy the company and the birds, but she notes that Eugene and Eloise Armstrong are the most persistent participants and that Eloise's ability to spot distant birds is remarkable. Eugene and Eloise enjoy telling about their experiences with their favorite birding partners. At the hawk watch several years ago, five or six observers spotted a distant raptor and finally identified it as the count's first Prairie Falcon, discussing its field marks as it went past. After it had gone, Beth announced that she never did get on it and didn't see it. "Well, why didn't you say something?" Eugene demanded. He notes that she does now. Another time, she enthused about the beauty of a passing adult male Rough-legged Hawk, adding, after it had flown past, that she wished she could see it for a little longer. As if on cue, the bird wheeled around and passed over them again, inspiring Beth to acknowledge that it was her favorite species of

raptor. Eugene and Eloise point out, however, that if you bird with Beth long enough, nearly every species of raptor becomes her favorite at one time or another. Eugene also enjoys describing Mark's effort to get a better view of a passing hawk, jumping up from his chair running to get a second look. He adds that when it comes to raptor identification, Mark is rarely wrong.

If you are an active birder, it would seem unlikely that you haven't met the Proescholdt team, but if you haven't, a good place to look for them in the fall is on a hill in Grammer Grove Park, preferably when there is a northwest wind. In this seemingly innocuous place — just a woods along a river valley — dozens, sometimes hundreds of hawks soar past, migrating south. One wonders, after all these years, if they're not just coming by to wave a friendly wing at two of their most loyal admirers.

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Field Reports — Spring 2004

Matthew C. Kenne

WEATHER

There are few things in this life as consistently variable as Iowa springtime weather: March, April, and May each had temperature ranges of 74-76 degrees between lows and highs during the month. Unusually dry air in April allowed single-day swings of 52 degrees (36 to 88) at Mason City on the 16th and 54 degrees (89 to 35) at Sibley on the 29th. Small areas centered in Buena Vista and Van Buren counties may have had below normal rainfall according to radar estimates during Iowa's fourth-wettest May on record. And the East Fork of the Des Moines River at Algona, without enough flow to support living fish at the beginning of the season, crested at almost three feet over flood stage in late May.

March was warm and wet, ending the dry spell begun in the summer of 2003, but snowfall for the month ranged from less than an inch at West Union to over 19 inches at Sioux City. April was warm and dry and without measurable snow. Strong low-pressure centers generated high winds across the state on April 18th and 28th, with gusts over 50 mph from the west and southwest. The desert-like temperature swings continued during the beginning of May with freezing tem-



Matthew C. Keene

peratures across the state and a low of 21 degrees at Cresco on the 3rd followed by 95 degrees at Sioux City on the 5th. Drenching May rains began on the 21st in northern Iowa and continued on the 22nd through the central part of the state. The statewide average for these storms was almost 3 inches of rain, but there were many locations reporting 4–6 inches and widespread river flooding. Lansing, site of the spring IOU Meeting, recorded almost 15 inches of rain during the month of May. The spring of 2004 ranks as the 19th warmest and 6th wettest spring season on record.

HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

The weather played a major part in birding success this spring. The drought conditions brought excellent shorebird habitat to the Coralville Reservoir/Hawkeye Wildlife Area and the Saylorville Reservoir/Jester Park area, but the large numbers, good variety, and rarities that were found through central Iowa couldn't be found in the north where dry wetlands were common. The major rainstorms of 21–22 May brought change and an effective end to the shorebird migration. Teeming shorelines and mudflats were inundated and replaced by "fresh" rainwater pools on chemically treated farmland with hardly a shorebird to be found. The storms also grounded good numbers of late migrant passerines. The most obvious example of this was the unusual number of Connecticut Warblers reported, but flycatchers, thrushes, and other warblers were affected. Hooded Warblers are on the increase in Minnesota, and this, more than weather, probably accounts for their being found in three northern border counties.

Willetts and Clay-colored Sparrows are very different birds, but both were far more widespread and numerous than usual. Inland Willetts winter on both coasts, but if we could only know whether Willetts migrating through Iowa this spring were overshoots from the west instead of off-course from the east, a climatologist might be able to make a connection between the similar occurrences of both species this spring. The winds of 18 and 28 Apr might well have been this connection, as well as that for the arrival of the Western Tanager and Spotted Towhees.

Two water-bird population trends to watch for are those of Black-necked Stilts and King Rails. Was the record influx of stilts a sign of things to come with their expanding range, with possible nesting in our future, or was it just a fluke? King Rails, on the other hand, seem hard-pressed in Iowa. Despite an easily seen bird at Hawkeye WA this year and another report, this species hadn't been seen in Iowa since 1999, and extensive, targeted searching for King Rails in north-central Iowa marshes this spring was unsuccessful. This is disappointing given the slight increase in wetland acreage in this area in recent years, especially when species like American Bittern seem to be more plentiful.

UNUSUAL SPECIES

Accidental or Casual species reported this spring include Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Black Rail, King Rail, Snowy Plover, Whimbrel, Iceland Gull, Townsend's Solitaire, Sprague's Pipit, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lazuli Bunting. Of these, only the Harlequin Duck, King Rail, Western Tanager, and the Lazuli Buntings could be seen the day after the initial sighting.

Other interesting finds were a Red-throated Loon, Yellow Rails, Prairie Falcons, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, and both Snowy Owl and Burrowing Owl present at the same time only a few miles apart in Kossuth County.

SPECIES DATA (All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species) (* = documented) (counties in italics)

Greater White-fronted Goose: Like most other waterfowl, they were spread across the southern half of the state by the first week of March. Most: 1,200 on 12 Mar at Silver L *Palo Alto* (LAS). A late flock of 32 was at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* 12 May (RGo, MCK).

Snow Goose: Other than “10,000s” over Broken Kettle Grasslands BCA *Plymouth* 6 Mar (BFH) and “A spectacular migration took place on 6 March. The skies were full of geese, almost from horizon to horizon.” in *Sioux* (JVD), few were reported. The last single stragglers were 23 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK) and 25 May at the Hubbard sewage lagoon *Hardin* (MPr).

Ross’s Goose: First: 12 on 6 Mar at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE). A few were found as far east as Cone M *Louisa* (6 on 22 Mar [THK] and 3 on 28 Mar [CE]). Most: 15 on 16 Mar at both Harrier M *Boone* (AB) and 23–26 Mar at Anderson L *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP). Last: 27 Apr in *Hardin* (MPr).

Mute Swan: An ad and imm were at Otter Creek M *Tama* 8 Mar (MPr-details).

Trumpeter Swan: Unbanded birds were noted 9 Mar at Pinchey Bottoms *Marion* (AB), 2 on 20 Apr at Anderson L *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP), and 9 May at Harmon L WMA *Winnebago* (PH).

Tundra Swan: All: 12 on 31 Mar at Dan Green Sl *Clay* (LAS), 2 from 31 Mar–1 Apr at Zirbel Sl *Cerro Gordo* (PH, RGo), 24 on 3 Apr in *Floyd* (JJD), and 2 on 9 Apr at Two Waters WMA *Worth* (PH).

Gadwall: Most: 320 on 13 Mar in *Marion* (AB) and 325 on 28 Mar at Hanlontown M *Worth* (PH) were far surpassed by 1,600 on 28 Mar at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE). Fifty-five were still at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* 26 May (MCK).

EURASIAN WIGEON: A pair were found by a Cedar Rapids Audubon group 27 Mar at Cone M *Louisa* (*Jim Durbin, BSc-details).

American Wigeon: Most: 130 on 14 Apr in *Sioux* (JJD).

American Black Duck: There were seven Mar reports of 1 or 2 birds from *Cerro Gordo*, *Allamakee*, *Wayne*, *Appanoose*, and *Louisa* (RGo, FL, AB, TJ, CE) until the last 2 on 10 Apr at Cardinal M *Winnesheik* (DeC).

Blue-winged Teal: First: 3 on 6 Mar at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC).

Cinnamon Teal: A drake Cinnamon Teal X Blue-winged Teal hybrid was photographed 14 Apr in *Boone* (RIA, PHA).

Northern Shoveler: Most: 300 on 11 Apr at Little Clear L *Pocahontas* (JVD) and 450 on 17 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE).

Northern Pintail: 4,200 on 6 Mar at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE) dwarfed all other counts.

Green-winged Teal: Most: 1,862 on 21 Mar at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE).

Canvasback: Most: 2,500 on 4 Mar at Pool 13 of the Mississippi R *Clinton* (PVN).

Ring-necked Duck: Most: 400 on 27 Mar at Rathbun Res *Appanoose* (RLC) and 400 on 29 Mar at Rice L *Worth* (PH).

Greater Scaup: Most: 60 on 6 Mar at the Mississippi R *Scott* (DAK-details). There were 10 other reports of 1–14 birds, with the last on 21 May at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (AB-details).

Lesser Scaup: Most: 2,000 on 20 Mar at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE) and 2,500 on 27 Mar at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

HARLEQUIN DUCK: The female found in Feb at Moline, IL was seen flying over the Iowa side of the Mississippi R *Scott* and was present until at least 10 Mar (*THK, *DAK, DR-details).

Surf Scoter: The only report was of a male in breeding plumage 25 Mar at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP-details) [second earliest].

White-winged Scoter: All: 2 from 9–12 Mar at L&D 14 *Scott* (DR, SMF) and 21 Mar at L&D 14 (SMF).

Long-tailed Duck: A drake 12–14 Mar at New L *Woodbury* was the only report (GLV, BFH).

Bufflehead: Most: 250 on 27 Mar at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Last: 8 May in *Woodbury* (JP).

Common Goldeneye: Most: 120 on 6 Mar at the Mississippi R *Scott* (DAK).

Hooded Merganser: Scattered broods were reported as far south as Polk City WA *Polk* (AB).

Common Merganser: As expected, the largest numbers were found in early Mar on the large reservoirs: 1,467 on 5 Mar at Red Rock Res *Marion* (AB) and 2,400 on 9 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Last: 24 Apr at New L *Woodbury* (BFH) and 1 May at Twelve Mile L *Emmet* (LAS).

Red-breasted Merganser: Most: 116 on 21 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE) and 104 at Silver L *Worth* (PH). Last: 8 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CJC).

Ruddy Duck: Most: 125 on 9 Apr at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Ten males on 28 May at Banner WA *Warren* were possible nesters (AJ).

Gray Partridge: Singles or pairs were found in fourteen counties in the northern two-thirds of the state, including three different locations in *Kossuth* 12 May (RGo, MCK). One 28 May at Lost Grove L WMA *Scott* was an outlier to their usual range (DR).

Ruffed Grouse: All reports were from the IOU Spring Meeting location in *Allamakee* 14–16 May (m.ob.).

Greater Prairie-Chicken: 10–13 were seen 28 Mar to 10 Apr at the Kellerton BCA lek *Ringgold* (AB, RIA, PHA, CJC, JGi).

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE: 2 males were displaying 12 Apr in the *Woodbury* area where they have been released by the DNR (*BFH-ph).

Northern Bobwhite: All: 2 Apr at Harrier M *Boone* (DJN), 3 Apr at Williams Pr *Johnson* (CJC), and 8 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JLF). These field reports don't

accurately reflect the occurrence of this species in the state.

Red-throated Loon: 1 or 2 May at Spirit L *Dickinson* (*LAS, PE).

Common Loon: Reported from 10 counties. First: 20 Mar at Maffitt Res *Polk* (JB). Most: 11 on 9 Apr at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Last: 31 May at Ada Hayden Pk *Story* (WO).

Pied-billed Grebe: First: 11 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (MPr) and 13 Mar in *Marion* (AB).

Horned Grebe: All: 6 on 28 Mar at Coralville Res *Johnson* (CJC), 31 Mar at Little Wall L *Hamilton* (MPr), 2 on 4 Apr at Rice L *Worth* (PH), 4 on 5 Apr at Coralville Res (CJC), and 9 Apr at Little Wall L (SSP, KLP).

Red-necked Grebe: All: 3 Apr at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (CE), 7 Apr at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 9 Apr on the Mississippi R *Clayton* (DAK), 26 Apr at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and 1 and 22 May at Cheever L *Emmet* (LAS, ETh).

Eared Grebe: First: 4 on 26 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). There were reports of 1–4 birds from 11 additional counties. The last was 14 May at the Hubbard sewage lagoon *Hardin* (MPr).

Western Grebe: There were 16 birds reported from 10 counties. First: 22 Apr at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP). Last: 3 on 31 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (CJF).

American White Pelican: Most: 750 on 10 Apr at Silver L *Worth* (PH) and 400 on 26 Apr at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (GLV). 300 were still at Rice L *Worth* 25 May (PH).

Double-crested Cormorant: First: 23 Mar at Little Wall L *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP). Most: 420 on 7 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB) and 920 on 14 Apr at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP).

American Bittern: There were 40 reports from 22 locations in 17 counties. First: 4 Apr at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK). Five bitterns were at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 1 May (BFH) and 4 were at Harrier M *Boone* 10 May (DT).

Least Bittern: First: 2 May at Otter Creek M *Tama* (JGi). 1–3 birds were found 19–30 May at Goose L *Clinton* (CE, DR), Hanlontown M *Worth* (RGo), Banner WA *Warren* (AJ, AB), and Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo).

Great Egret: First: 30 Mar at Swan L *Johnson* (THK). Most: 40 on 2 May in *Clayton* (DAK).

Snowy Egret: All: 2 on 17 Apr at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DR), 18 Apr at Otter Creek M *Tama* (CJC), 21 and 30 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (DR, AB), 21 Apr at MidAmerican Ponds *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), 22 Apr at Pool 9 of the Mississippi R *Allamakee* (RZ), 25 Apr in Cherokee (DB), and 27 Apr at Banner WA *Warren* (AB).

Little Blue Heron: All: 17 Apr at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (SSP, KLP), 18 Apr at Otter Creek M *Tama* (CJC, CE), 1 May at Iowa City (JPB), 4 May at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (KN), 8 May at Medicine Creek WA *Wayne* (AB), 8 May in *Johnson* (CJC), and 17 May at Otter Creek M (MPR, CE).

Cattle Egret: First: 4 Apr at Rice L *Worth* (PH). Most: 19 on 6 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK) and 24 on 24 May in *Polk* (JGi). There were 20 additional reports from 12 counties of up to 13 birds.

Green Heron: First: 22 Apr at 2 locations in *Polk* (AB, SSP, KLP).

Black-crowned Night Heron: First: 17 Apr at Anderson L *Hamilton* (MPR). 1–8 birds were noted from 11 other locations.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron: All: An adult 27 Apr at Kent Pk *Johnson* (THK, CJC, CE) and 10 May at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK).

White-faced Ibis: All: 1 May at Ada Hayden Pk *Story* (WO, HZ), 10 May in *Madison* (DT), 13 May at Big Wall L *Wright* (JJD), and 23 May at Riverton WA *Fremont* (LJP, BKP).

Osprey: One was noted early 13 Mar at Montrose Lee (RLC) [third earliest]. Nesting was attempted again this year at Runnells WA *Marion* (JGi, AB, AJ).

Mississippi Kite: The only report this spring was 17 May near last year's nest site in West Des Moines (AB).

Bald Eagle: There were over 100 eagles feasting on winter-kill fish along the East Fork of the Des Moines R and Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* during the mid-March ice breakup, a large gathering for an "inland" site (MCK).

Northern Harrier: Noted throughout the period across the state. Most: 11 on 27 Mar at Medicine Creek WA *Wayne* (AB). Possible nesting birds were found in late May in *Wayne* and *Decatur* in the south (AB) and *Dickinson* in the north (LAS).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Last: 17 May at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK).

Cooper's Hawk: Nesting birds noted Goose L *Clinton* (PVN, CE), L Ahquabi SP *Warren* (JB), Hooper WA *Warren* (JGi), Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, CJF), and in *Black Hawk* (KN).

Red-shouldered Hawk: Reports were similar to last year; a possible wintering bird 10 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (DK); followed by 6 singles in *Cerro Gordo*, *Lucas*, *Worth*, *Delaware*, and *Howard* (RGo, MPR, CJF, PH); and nesters noted at the IOU Spring Meeting in *Allamakee* (AB, CJC, SSP, KLP) and George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (KN).

Broad-winged Hawk: First: 16 Apr in *Hardin* (MPR) and 7 on 16 Apr at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK). Most, and the only other report of more than 1 or 2 birds: 60 on 19 Apr at Guttenburg *Clayton* (DAK). An ad 27 May at Call SP *Kossuth* was probably nesting nearby (MCK).

Swainson's Hawk: First: 8 on 17 Apr at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (BFH) and 10 on 18 Apr at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOr). Also found 30 Apr in *Madison* (DT), 5 May in *Delaware* (MPR), 24 May in *Wright* (SSP), and 28 May in *Pocahontas* (KLP).

Red-tailed Hawk: Most: 71 on 19 Mar at Waubonsie SP *Fremont* (LJP, BKP).

Rough-legged Hawk: All: 6 Mar in *Warren* (JGi), 26 Mar at Goose L *Clinton* (DR), 19 Mar in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 22 Mar at Hanlontown M *Worth* (RGo), 31 Mar at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (GLV), early Apr at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK), and 25 Apr at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CJC, CE).

Golden Eagle: All: 6 Mar in *Story* (CK), 6 Mar at Broken Kettle Grasslands BCA *Plymouth* (BFH), and 12–31 Mar at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (GLV-details).

Merlin: Four of the wintering Glendale Cemetery Merlins at Des Moines were present until at least 2 Apr (JGi). Eight other singles were found from 22 Mar until 1 May in *Worth*, *Kossuth*, *Polk*, *Wright*, *Black Hawk*, *Johnson*, and *Woodbury* (RGo, MCK, SSP, KLP, MWJ, CJC, JLF, BFH).

Peregrine Falcon: Seventeen migrants were reported throughout the period. Breeding activity was noted near Guttenburg *Clayton* (DAK), Cedar Rapids *Linn* (BSc), and Des Moines (BE).

Prairie Falcon: Found 2 Mar in *Hamilton* (JJD-details) and 6 Mar in *Lyon* (LAS-details).

Yellow Rail: One 22 Apr at Sweet M *Bremer* (DWM) was in normal habitat, but an injured migrant found 20 May on a driveway at Cherokee *Cherokee* was not (DB-details). The Cherokee bird was taken to a rehabilitator and later released.

BLACK RAIL: A report was referred to the Records Committee.

KING RAIL: One discovered 11 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* by Bob Dick and James Huntington was relocated by many until 16 May (*BD, *JLF, THK-photo). This is the first Iowa King Rail report since 1999. Two birds were reported flushed from the same spot at Errington M *Polk* 30 May, but were not refund at this previous nesting locale (BE).

Virginia Rail: First: 17 Apr at Bjorkboda M *Hamilton* (MPR). Good numbers were found by Rita Goranson during northcentral

Iowa rail surveys: 12 on 19 May and 8 on 26 May at Eagle L *Hancock*, and 8 on 24 May at Hanlontown M *Worth*.

Sora: One was early on 4 Apr at Saylorville WA *Dallas* (JJD-details). More widely reported than Virginia Rails, Soras were found outside their northcentral Iowa stronghold in May in *Johnson*, *Pottawattamie*, *Lyon*, and *Clayton* (THK, MOr, DEC, DAK).

Common Moorhen: First and most: 14 on 19 May at Goose L *Clinton* (CE). Also 2 on 19 May at Green Island WA *Jackson* (CE), 1 or 2 from 23–27 May at Banner WA *Warren* (AB, AJ, JGi), 24 May at Hanlontown M *Worth* (RGo), and 26 May at Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo).

American Coot: For those that enjoy the image of many, many coots: 3,000 were at New L *Woodbury* 12 Apr (JJD).

Sandhill Crane: The largest gathering was 14 on 1 Mar at Pool Slough *Allamakee* (FL). I received reports from *Clinton*, *Jackson*, *Winneshiek*, *Louisa*, *Bremer*, *Tama*, and *Worth*, where there may be nesting; and *Scott*, *Johnson*, *Jones*, *Cerro Gordo*, *Hancock*, *Winnebago*, and *Kossuth*, which probably represent migrants.

Black-bellied Plover: First: 3 on 6 May at Jester Pk *Polk* (BE). Most: disparate counts of 37 and 66 on 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (THK, CE).

American Golden Plover: First: 6 on 10 Apr in *Appanoose* (RLC). They were reported from seven counties through central Iowa, and one eastern and one western county. Most: 118 on 14 May in *Hamilton* (AB) and 82 flying over Algona *Kossuth* 17 May (MCK). Last: 25 on 28 May at Colo Ponds *Story* (HZ).

SNOWY PLOVER: One was found 8 May at Hawkeye WA on a *Johnson* Big Day (*JLF, *THK, *CE).

Semipalmated Plover: First: 3 on 10 Apr at Mallard M *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Most: 100 on 1 May at Polk City WA *Polk* (CK) and 150 on 12 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE). Last: 2 on 22 May at Polk City WA (AB).

Piping Plover: First: 2 on 17 Apr at Port Neal Ponds *Woodbury* (BFH). Eight birds with two nests were at this location 27 May (BFH). Also 1 May in *Pocahontas* (PE), 1 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE), 6 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK), and 4 on 21 May at MidAmerican Ponds *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP).

Black-necked Stilt: An unprecedented incursion into central Iowa: the first 2 were found by John Rutenbeck 11 May at Diehl Wetlands *Warren*, where one lingered to 17 May (AJ, AB). On 12 May, 6 were found spread between different locations at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (BSc, DJD, THK, JLF, CJC, CE). Up to 4 stilts could be found at Hawkeye WA until 18 May (AB, AJ, CE). Also on 12 May, 2 stilts were found at Sedan Bottoms, a first for *Appanoose* (RLC, TJ). Finally, one at Ada Hayden Pk *Story* 15–18 May also provided a first county record (WO, HZ).

American Avocet: First and most: 12 on 17 Apr at Port Neal Ponds *Woodbury* (GLV, BFH). Also 26 Apr at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (JJJ), 2–5 from 27 Apr to 1 May at Coralville Res *Johnson* (JLF, THK, CE), 30 Apr at Mallard M *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 12 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE).

Greater Yellowlegs: First: 20 Mar at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (DeC). Most: 30 on 17 Apr at Coralville Res *Johnson* (CE) and 30 on 27 Apr at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (BD). Last: 17 May at Hawkeye WA (CE).

Lesser Yellowlegs: First: 27 Mar at Colo Ponds *Story* (CK). Most: 1,000 were counted several times from 22 Apr until 10 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (BD, THK, CE).

Solitary Sandpiper: First: 18 Apr at Hanlontown M *Worth* (PH). Most: 30 on 1 May at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (BFH). Last: 14 May in *Hamilton* (AB).

Willet: First: 7 on 20 Apr at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP). Willets were much more widespread this year than last, with 15 reports that had higher counts than any in 2003. The migration peak was 29 Apr to 1 May with counts of 39, 30, 34, 26, 51, 22, and 42 from *Warren* (2), *Story*, *Greene*, *Polk*, *Dickinson*, and *Marshall* (JGi, CK, DT, LAS, MPr).

Spotted Sandpiper: First: 20 Apr at Little Wall L *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP).

Upland Sandpiper: First: 25 Apr at Homestead *Iowa* (CJC, CE). Up to 5 birds were reported from 10 other counties.

WHIMBREL: Four were found 17 May at Jester Pk *Polk* (*AB, *AJ, *RIA, *PHA). Two were late 28 May in flooded fields in *Hancock* (*SSP) [second latest].

Hudsonian Godwit: First: 4 on 16 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (DK). Only one to 13 birds were found in nine additional counties, with the last 8 on 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE).

Marbled Godwit: First: 2 on 7 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB). One was present in the Saylorville Res *Polk* area until 3 were found 6 May (BE). Also, one was at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 25–28 Apr (CJC, CE, BD, THK), and late singles were found 16–18 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK) and 24 May in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Ruddy Turnstone: All: 17 May at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB, AJ), 2 on 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (THK, CE), and 24 May in *Worth* (RGo, PH).

Sanderling: First: 4 on 30 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB). Other counts at this location were 7 on 7 May (JGi) and 6 on 21–22 May (AB). One or 2 were found in *Story*, *Johnson*, *Cerro Gordo*, and *Woodbury* (WO, THK, CJC, PH, CE, BFH). The largest flock was 17 on 17 May at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: First: 2 on 10 Apr at Port Neal Ponds *Woodbury* (BFH-details) [record early]. Most: 100 on 14 May at Mallard M *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Last: 40 on 22 May at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB).

Western Sandpiper: 9 May at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* (MOr-details).

Least Sandpiper: First: 20 on 10 Apr at Mallard M *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Most: 5,000 on 8 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (BD) is five times the previous high count for spring. 1,000 were also counted at this location 10 May (CE).

White-rumped Sandpiper: First: 3 on 25 Apr at Eagle L *Kossuth* (MCK), 2 on 30 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB), 2 on 30 Apr at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (AB), and 5 on 30 Apr at Knutson's Pond *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) are earlier than past records would predict, but in line with recent first arrival dates. Most: 96 on 14 May at Jester Pk (AB). The usual late birds were found 27 May at Port Neal Ponds *Woodbury* (BFH) and 2 on 28 May at Colo Ponds *Story* (MPr).

Baird's Sandpiper: First: 2 on 4 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB). Most: 35 on 18 Apr at Polk City WA *Polk* (CJC, CE) and 50 on 8 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (THK). Last: 6 on 12 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK).

Pectoral Sandpiper: First: 5 on 23 Mar at Colo Ponds *Story* (MPr). Like Least Sandpipers, there were thousands of Pectorals at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* in late Apr and early May: 1,000 on 17 Apr (CE), 1,000 on 6 May (THK), 3,000 on 8 May (BD), and 1,000 on 10 May (CE). Last: 5 on 27 May in *Guthrie* (AB) and 7 on 28 May in *Hancock* (SSP, KLP).

Dunlin: First: 10 on 17 Apr at Coralville Res *Johnson* (CE). Most: 108 on 17 May at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB) and 200 on 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE). These, and 5 on 18 May at Knutson's Pond *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), were the last.

Stilt Sandpiper: First: 30 Apr at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (AB). Most: 18 on 9 May in *Winnebago* (RGo, PH) and 18 on 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE). Last: 27 May at Port Neal Ponds *Woodbury* (BFH).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: None reported.

Short-billed Dowitcher: First: 26 on 29 Apr at Banner WA *Warren* (JGi). Most: 98 on 6 May at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK). Last: 2 on 18 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK) and 50 on 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (THK, CE).

Long-billed Dowitcher: First: 13 Apr at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 50–60 on 25–27 Apr at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE, BD). Last: 8 May at Hawkeye WA (CJC, CE).

Wilson's Snipe: Most: 100 on 10 Apr in *Allamakee* (RZ).

American Woodcock: First: 8 on 4 Mar in *Poweshiek* (RV). A nest with three eggs was found 21 Apr at Rolling Thunder Prairie *Woodbury* (Susanne Hickey fide JJD).

Wilson's Phalarope: First: 2 on 26 Apr at Knutson's Pond *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 25 on 26 Apr at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (GLV). They were reported from 12 additional counties, with the highest count 38 on 2 May in *Dickinson* (PE). Last: 4 on 24 May in *Story* (AB).

Red-necked Phalarope: All: 30 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB), 12 on 1 May in *Franklin* (RGo), 2 on 17 May at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK), and 2 on 18 May at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK).

LAUGHING GULL: A report was referred to the Records Committee.

Franklin's Gull: First: an alternate ad 13 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Most: 167 on 2 May in *Polk* (CK).

Bonaparte's Gull: First: 4 Mar at L&D 14 *Scott* (SMF-details) [second earliest]. The next report was 26 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Most: 50 on 7 Apr at Saylorville Res (AB). Last: 18 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (THK, CE).

Ring-billed Gull: Most: 5,700 on 13 Mar at Red Rock Res *Marion* (AB) and 5,000 on 14, 28 Mar at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP).

Herring Gull: Last: 8 May at Pickerel L *Clay* (LAS).

Thayer's Gull: All: an ad 5 Mar at L&D14 *Scott* (SMF), an imm 12 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB), an imm 13 Mar at Red Rock Res *Marion* (AB), 21 Mar at L&D 14 (SMF), and 11 Apr at Saylorville Res (BE).

ICELAND GULL: Two reports were referred to the Records Committee.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: An imm was at Red Rock Res *Marion* 13 Mar (AB-details) [third latest].

Caspian Tern: First: 4 on 30 Apr at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB). Most: 86 at Jester Pk 17 May (AB). Last: 28 May at Ventura M *Hancock* (RGo).

Common Tern: First: 3 on 12 May at Jester Pk *Polk* (AB, MPr). Large flocks of Common Terns were reported at two locations, a rare occurrence in the state. Twenty-five were found 14 May at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH-details), 12 were still present there 18 May (PH-details), and 23 were at Jester Pk 22 May (AB-details). There were also 5 on 14 May at Rice L *Worth* (PH), and singles 22 May at Smith L *Kossuth* (MCK), 28 May at Ventura M *Hancock* (RGo), and 31 May at Welch L WPA *Dickinson* (LAS).

Forster's Tern: First: 4 on 17 Apr at New L *Woodbury* (BFH). Most: 43 on 1 May at Red Rock Res *Marion* (AB).

Least Tern: None reported, but please refer to the Summer 2004 Field Reports (IBL 74[4]).

Black Tern: First: a lone bird 20 Apr at Zirbel Sl *Cerro Gordo* (CJF-details) [second earliest]. Large numbers appeared after the late-May storms: 652 on 23 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB), 300 on 26 May in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and 600 on 28 May at New L *Woodbury* (GLV).

Eurasian Collared-Dove: There were reports of 1–3 birds from *Appanoose*, *Warren*, *Decatur*, *Wayne*, *Boone*, *Black Hawk*, *Carroll*, *Sac*, *Crawford*, *Clay*, *Poweshiek*, *Fremont*, *Humboldt*, *Cherokee*, *Marshall*, *Delaware*, *Cerro Gordo*, and *Kossuth* (RIA, PHA, AB, MWJ, RTh, LAS, TJ, MPr, WRS, JJD, DB, SSP, RGo, MCK).

Black-billed Cuckoo: First: 2 on 8 May at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC) and 8 May at Stephens SF *Lucas* (MPr). Nine other single birds were reported from seven counties.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: First: 8 May in *Warren*, *Appanoose*, *Lucas*, and *Johnson* (JB, JGi, RLC, MPr, JLF).

Snowy Owl: An injured bird was captured 5 Apr at Galbraith *Kossuth* and sent to a rehabilitator (Esther Tripp-photo, MCK) [third latest]. This late bird was particularly surprising after a winter without an invasion.

BURROWING OWL: One was found 26 Mar at a roadside burrow in southern *Kossuth* and was last seen 31 Mar (Scott Moeller-photo, MCK) [second earliest].

Long-eared Owl: All: 2 on 6 Mar at Union Grove SP *Tama* (MPr) and 17 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (DK).

Short-eared Owl: Up to 5 were found until 12 Apr in *Wayne*, *Butler*, *Louisa*, *Ringgold*, and *Woodbury* (RIA, PHA, RGo, THK, CJC, CE, AB, JGi, BFH).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Only one this spring from 17–21 Mar on the Judy Drenth farm near Decorah *Winneshiek* (fide DeC).

Common Nighthawk: First: 2 on 22 Apr at Ames *Story* (DCH-details) [second earliest] and one 23 Apr in *Johnson* (JLF) [third earliest]. No one reported migrant flocks of any size, and a decline in numbers appears to continue in some northcentral Iowa towns (MCK).

Chuck-will's-widow: Chucks still occupy their traditional area near Waubonsie SP *Fremont* (WRS).

Whip-poor-will: First: 20 Apr at Ames *Story* (SSP). A nest with two eggs was found 20 May at Sand Creek WA *Decatur* (AB).

Chimney Swift: First: 27 Apr at Ames *Story* (SSP, KLP) and 2 on 29 Apr at Guttenburg *Clayton* (DAK).

Hummingbird sp: A hummingbird that flew through the yard of the Harr residence in *Boone* 22 Apr was most likely a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, although it wasn't identifiable to species (DCH-details). This would be record early for that species by two days.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Pairs at Bacon Creek Pk *Woodbury* and Call SP *Kossuth* 27 May were probably nesting (GLV, SSP, KLP).

Northern Flicker: A red-shafted bird was at Sioux Center *Sioux* 6 Apr (JVD).

Pileated Woodpecker: One at Wanata SP *Clay* was about as far northwest as this species flies in Iowa (LAS).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: First: 9 May at Moorehead Pk *Ida* (PE) and 10 May in *Warren* (AJ). Last: 27 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (SSP, KLP) and 29 May at Ledges SP *Boone* (DJN).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: First: 8 May both at Stephens SF *Lucas* (MPr) and Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: First: 10 May in *Warren* (AJ). They were reported from 10 additional counties, although few *Empidonax* flycatcher sightings are accompanied by details of voice or plumage. Most: 6 on 23 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK) and 4 on 23 May at Brookside Pk *Story* (SSP, KLP). Late birds were found 31 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK) and Sioux Center *Sioux* (JVD).

Acadian Flycatcher: First: 15 May at Yellow River SF *Allamakee* (AB, JGi, CJC, SSP, KLP). Ray Cummins found only one 30 May at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren*, and commented "Usually you would find a dozen at Lacey in late spring."

Alder Flycatcher: First: 11 May at Squaw Creek Pk *Linn* (BSc-details) [second earliest] followed by 16 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 4 on 22 May at Chichaqua

WA *Polk* (DK) and 6 on 22–23 May at Call SP (MCK). They could still be found 31 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK) and Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MPr).

Willow Flycatcher: First: 12 May at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (RLC). Most: 5 on 30 May at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* (JB).

Least Flycatcher: First: 28 Apr at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (DeC) and 2 on 29 Apr at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 50 on 23 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 31 May at Smith WA (MCK).

Eastern Phoebe: First: 2 on 23 Mar at Pine L SP *Hardin* (MPr).

Great Crested Flycatcher: First: 5 May in *Delaware* (MPr) and 6 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Western Kingbird: Outside usual nesting areas, 2 were found 8 May in *Clay* (LAS) and one 10 May in *Ida* (PE).

Eastern Kingbird: First: 18 May at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (TJ-details) [second earliest].

Loggerhead Shrike: One or two were found in 18 counties from the western two-thirds of the state. First: 18 Mar in *Pottawattamie* (DJN).

Northern Shrike: Seven individuals were found until 31 Mar in *Plymouth*, *Woodbury*, *Johnson*, *Linn*, *Story*, *Adams*, and *Winneshiek* (BFH, GLV, THK, DR, WO, RIA, PHA, DK).

White-eyed Vireo: First: 3 May at Donnellson Unit *Lee* (CE). Also found in *Johnson*, *Lucas*, *Appanoose*, *Hardin*, and *Decatur* in the south (JLF, MPr, RLC, AB), and 14 May at Yellow River SF *Allamakee* in the north (DK).

Bell's Vireo: Most: 5 on 15 May at Cairo Woods *Louisa* (BSc), 5 on 18 May at Medicine Creek WA *Wayne* (AB), and 6 on 28 May at Brown's L *Woodbury* (GLV). They were reported from 11 counties.

Yellow-throated Vireo: First: 1 May at both L Ahquabi SP *Warren* (JGi) and Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE).

Blue-headed Vireo: The first were found in the north 27 Apr at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (CJF) and 29 Apr at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 6 on 17 May at Brookside Pk *Story* (SSP, KLP). Last: 27 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK).

Warbling Vireo: First: 23 and 24 Apr in *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC) and 24 Apr at Waterworks Pk *Polk* (JGi, RIC).

Philadelphia Vireo: First: 7 May in *Sac* (PE) and 8 May at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOR). Twelve of 22 additional birds were found 23–26 May at eight locations.

Red-eyed Vireo: One singing 25 Apr at Woodland Mounds *Warren* was early (JB, JGi-details) [second earliest]. The next report was 3 May at Croton Unit *Lee* (CE).

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE: One was reported 6 Mar from the only regular location at Broken Kettle Grasslands BCA *Plymouth* (BFH).

Purple Martin: The first scout was noted early 23 Mar at Centerville *Appanoose* (RLC) [ties third earliest]. Most: 200 on 27 Apr at Guttenburg *Clayton* (DAK).

Tree Swallow: First: 2 on 13 Mar at Princeton WA *Scott* (*DR) [record early] followed by 17 Mar at Cone M *Louisa* (BSc).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: First: 6 Apr in *Johnson* (CE) [ties third earliest] followed by 10 Apr in *Woodbury* (BFH) and 10 Apr at Ada Hayden Pk *Story* (WO).

Bank Swallow: First: 17 Apr in *Iowa* (CE).

Cliff Swallow: First: noted early 11 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE) [second earliest].

Barn Swallow: First: 26 Mar at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Widely scattered in time and place: 2 Mar and 9 Apr at Sioux Center *Sioux* (JVD), 11 Apr at Stephens SF *Lucas* (AB), 29 Apr to 3 May at Garnavillo *Clayton* (DAK), 4 May at Smith L *Kossuth* (MCK), and 9 May at Fairmount Cem *Scott* (DR). On 9 May, Berry

Engelbrechtsen found a pair building a nest at Jester Pk *Polk*. The nest was later abandoned.

Brown Creeper: Nest building was observed in early Apr in *Johnson* by Jill Beckman, but this nest was also abandoned. A pair in suitable habitat 17 May at Dudgeon L *Benton* was probably nesting (CE).

Carolina Wren: There were eight reports of 1–5 birds from central and southeast Iowa plus 16 Apr in *Woodbury* (BFH) and 24 Apr at Pike's Peak SP *Clayton* (DAK).

House Wren: First: 17 Apr at Ann Johnson's yard *Warren*, and then across the state on 18 Apr at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC) and near Guttenburg *Clayton* (DAK).

Winter Wren: First: 25 Mar at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). There were several reported until 27 Apr at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK), but 2 on 22 May at Brookside Pk *Story* were late (SSP-details, KLP-details).

Sedge Wren: First: 6 on 26 Apr at Hanlontown M *Worth* (RGo).

Marsh Wren: First: 22 Apr at Muskrat Sl *Jones* (CE).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Most: at least 25 on 28 Mar at Two Waters WA *Worth* (PH).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: First: 31 Mar at Anderson L *Hamilton* (MPr). Most: 43 on 14 Apr at Ames *Story* (SSP). Last: 22 May at Brookside Pk *Story* (SSP, KLP).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Five on 17 Apr at Walnut Woods SP *Polk* were the first reported (JGi).

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: 12 Mar at Waterman Creek O'Brien (LAS-details) was the only report.

Veery: First: 9 May in *Poweshiek* (RV). Most: 3 on 23 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 30 May at Lakeside Lab *Dickinson* (NB) and 31 May at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MPr).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: First: 2 on 29 Apr at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 25 May at Liscomb *Marshall* (BPr) and 26 May at Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo).

Swainson's Thrush: One early report was referred the Records Committee, the next were 4 May at Pine L SP *Hardin* (MPR) and 4 on 4 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). Peak numbers were found 23 May: 60 at Call SP (MCK) and 30 at Wickiup NA *Linn* (CJC). Last: 30 May at Lakeside Lab *Dickinson* (NB).

Hermit Thrush: First: 2 on 30 Mar at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK), 31 Mar at Ames *Story* (SSP), and 1 Apr at Hickory Hill Pk *Johnson* (CJC). Last: 3 May at Bacon Creek Pk *Woodbury* (BFH) and 4–6 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK-details).

Wood Thrush: First: a singing bird 21 Apr at Waterworks Pk *Polk* (JGi-details) [second earliest].

American Robin: Paul Hertzels counted 3,000 robins at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* 23 Mar.

Gray Catbird: One was very early 18 Apr at Guttenburg *Clayton* (*DAK) [record earliest].

Northern Mockingbird: Reported from nine southern counties plus 22 Apr and 7 May in *Woodbury* (BFH, GLV) and 19 May in *Jackson* (CW).

Brown Thrasher: First: 4 Apr at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (DeC).

American Pipit: First and most: 30 on 2 Apr in *Johnson* (CJC). Last: 3 on 18 May at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC) [ties third latest].

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT: A report was referred to the Records Committee.

Blue-winged Warbler: First: 30 Apr in Spencer *Clay* (LAS). Many were seen in *Allamakee* during the IOU Spring Meeting.

Golden-winged Warbler: First 3 May at Donnellson Unit *Lee* (CE). Most: 4 on 8 May at Sycamore Access *Polk* (BE). Last: 26 May at Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo).

Tennessee Warbler: First: a singing bird 29 Apr in Cedar Rapids *Linn* (BSc). Most: 94 were counted 15 May in *Allamakee* (SSP, KLP). Last: 31 May in *Wayne* (AB), *Marshall* (MPR), and *Kossuth* (MCK).

Orange-crowned Warbler: First: 18 Apr at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK) and 19 Apr at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: a singing bird 20 May at Sand Creek WA *Decatur* (AB).

Nashville Warbler: First: 29 Apr at both Des Moines (AJ) and Brookside Pk *Story* (CK, SSP, KLP). Most: 12 on 8 May at L Macbride *Johnson* (CE). Last: 27 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK, SSP, KLP) and 28 May at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Northern Parula: First: 16 Apr at Sycamore Access *Polk* (AB).

Yellow Warbler: First: 30 Apr at Ventura M *Hancock* (RGo).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: First: 3 May at Donnellson Unit *Lee* (CE). Most: 20 on 18 May at Hickory Hill Pk *Johnson* (CE). One was still present 31 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK).

Magnolia Warbler: First: 6 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 2 on 7 May in *Sac* (PE). Last: 31 May at Sioux Center *Sioux* (JVD).

Cape May Warbler: First: 3 May in *Dubuque* (CW). There were reports of up to 5 birds from eight counties until the last singles 23 May at both Algona *Kossuth* (MCK) and L Meyer *Winneshiek* (DeC).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: All: 9 May at Effigy Mounds NM *Allamakee* (SSP, KLP) and 19 May at Hickory Hill Pk *Johnson* (JPB).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: First: 2 on 12 Mar at Everly *Clay* (LAS). Last: 3 on 18 May at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC).

Black-throated Green Warbler: First: 22 Apr at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (SSP, KLP). Last: 27 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (SSP, KLP).

Blackburnian Warbler: Only single birds were found after the first 2 on 2 May in *Poweshiek* (RV). Last: 31 May at both Spencer *Clay* (LAS) and L Macbride *Johnson* (DP).

Yellow-throated Warbler: First: 16 Apr at Sycamore Access *Polk* (AB). Birds at Pike's Peak SP *Clayton* 16 May (AB, DAK, MPR, SSP, KLP) and Lansing *Allamakee* 26 May (FL-ph) were outside their usual range.

Palm Warbler: First: 24 Apr at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). The last big push was 8–9 May with 6 in *Allamakee* (DeC), and 12 at both Pike's Peak SP *Clayton* (DAK) and Ada Hayden Pk *Story* (WO). None were reported after that weekend.

Bay-breasted Warbler: First: 30 Apr at Ames *Story* (SSP, KLP). Most: 4 on 23 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 27 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (SSP, KLP). They were reported after that weekend.

Blackpoll Warbler: First: 30 Apr at Pine L SP *Hardin* (MPr). Most: 15 on 15 May at Hickory Hill Pk *Johnson* (CE) and 12 on 22 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK).

Cerulean Warbler: First: 5 May at L Macbride *Johnson* (DP). Up to 7 singing males and 2 nest-building females were found 15 May in *Allamakee* at the Spring IOU Meeting (m.ob.)

Black-and-white Warbler: One was early 6 Apr at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (*Walt Stephenson) [third earliest], and the next earliest were 2 on 26 Apr at Sioux Center *Sioux* (JVD). Last: 23 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK).

American Redstart: First: 3 May at Toolesboro *Louisa* (CE).

Prothonotary Warbler: First: 3 May at Rathbun WA *Wayne* (AB). Four singing males and one female were found 12 May at Algona *Kossuth*.

Worm-eating Warbler: The usual one or two were found at Croton Unit *Lee* (RIC, CE, JLF), but singles 12 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (RGo, MCK) and 19 May at Nine Eagles SP *Decatur* (AB) were outside their normal range.

Ovenbird: First: 10 on 25 Apr at Woodland Mounds *Warren* (JB, JGi). Two singing 18 May at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC) shows this species can be found nesting across the state.

Northern Waterthrush: First: 1 May at both Ann Johnson's yard *Warren* and Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE). Last: 26 May at Eagle L *Hancock* (RGo).

Louisiana Waterthrush: First: 4 Apr at Ledges SP *Boone* (DJN). Up to two pairs were reported from 10 counties in their normal range.

Kentucky Warbler: First: 29 Apr at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (JLF). They were found in eight regular counties, but one discovered 18 May at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC) was well out of range.

Connecticut Warbler: There were an amazing 20 reports of at least 24 birds at fourteen locations across the eastern half of the state. First: 13 May at Hickory Hill Pk *Johnson* (THK, BD), where four were found 15 May (CE). Last: 26 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (DK). Half of the reports were from the period 22–24 May.

Mourning Warbler: First: 8 May at L Macbride *Johnson* (CE). Most: 10 on 17 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 8 on 26 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 31 May at Sioux Center *Sioux* (JVD).

Common Yellowthroat: First: 24 Apr at Woodpecker M *Appanoose* (RLC) and 28 Apr at Red Haw SP *Lucas* (MPr).

Hooded Warbler: Expected birds were at Donnellson Unit *Lee* 3, 5 May (CE, JLF) and L Ahquabi SP *Warren* 5 May (AB). Also found 19 Apr at Hickory Hills Pk *Tama* (TSS) and 25 Apr at Hooper WA *Warren* (JGi). Unexpected birds out of range were 2 on 4 May at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (EB), 12 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (RGo, MCK), 18 May at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC), 19 May at Brookside Pk *Story* (HZ), and 31 May at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK).

Wilson's Warbler: First: 1 May at Ames *Story* (SSP, KLP). Last: 3 on 28 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK) and 28 May at McIntosh SP *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Canada Warbler: First: 8 May at Nobles Is. *Allamakee* (DeC-details) [record early]. Most: 6 on 23 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 31 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK).

Yellow-breasted Chat: All: 11 and 19 May at Sherman Pk *Clinton* (PVN), 15 May at Cairo Woods *Louisa* (BSc), 16 May in *Johnson* (CE), 30 May in *Lee* (JLF), and 30 May in *Des Moines* (JLF).

Summer Tanager: First: 1 May at Sharon Bluffs SP *Appanoose* (TJ). Also found in *Van Buren*, *Polk*, *Ringgold*, and *Pottawattamie* in its usual range (JLF, DT, RIA, PHA, AB, Janet Greer). Found in the north: 9 May at Effigy Mounds NM *Allamakee* (SSP, KLP), 17 May at Brookside Pk *Story* (SSP, KLP), 19 May in Clear Lake *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 19 May in rural *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 27 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (SSP, KLP).

Scarlet Tanager: First: 1 May at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (TJ). Most: Shane and Katy Patterson counted 30 on the morning of 15 May in *Allamakee*.

WESTERN TANAGER: A male visited a feeder 29 Apr to 1 May at Oak L *Kossuth* (*Connie Mechler-photo).

Spotted Towhee: All from the western half of the state: 29 Apr at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK), 29 Apr at Bacon Creek Pk *Woodbury* (BFH), 29 Apr at Spirit Lake *Dickinson* (ETh), 30 Apr at Spencer *Clay* (LAS), 1 May at Sunken Grove WA *Pocahontas* (PE), 3 May at Moorehead Pk *Ilda* (PE), and 8 May at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MOR).

Eastern Towhee: First: 1 Apr at Wexford *Allamakee* (FL).

American Tree Sparrow: Last: 14 on 18 Apr at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC).

Chipping Sparrow: First: 19 Mar in *Jackson* (*Donald Nissen), followed by 2 Apr in Garnavillo *Clayton* (DAk) and 4 Apr at Cone M *Louisa* (CE).

Clay-colored Sparrow: They were more widespread in central and eastern Iowa than usual in groups of 1–7 birds. First: 2 on 18 Apr at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC). A surprising 50 Clays on 30 Apr were found feeding along a road in *Kossuth* with half that many Chipping Sparrows (MCK). Last: 26 May at Smith WA *Kossuth* (MCK).

Field Sparrow: First: 27 Mar at Medicine Creek WA *Wayne* (AB).

Vesper Sparrow: First: 8 on 27 Mar at Rathbun Res in *Appanoose* (RLC) and 28 Mar at Cone M *Louisa* (WO).

Lark Sparrow: First: 14 Apr at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CE). Two on 25 May at Elk Creek M *Worth* (PH) may have been somewhat outside their nebulous Iowa range.

Savannah Sparrow: First: 24 Mar at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK).

Grasshopper Sparrow: First: 3 on 24 Apr in *Johnson* (CJC).

Henslow's Sparrow: Up to 12 were found in *Wayne*, *Lee*, *Worth*, *Decatur*, *Ringgold*, *Union*, *Wapello*, and *Polk* (AB, CE, RGo, RIA, PHA, PMT).

Le Conte's Sparrow: All: 6 May at Otter Creek M *Tama* (AB) and 3 on 25 May at Union Hills BCA *Cerro Gordo* (KLP-details) [second latest].

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: All: 9 May at DeSoto NWR *Harrison* (MOR), 14 May at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* (PH), 19 May at Goose L *Clinton* (CE), and one singing 25 May at Union Hills BCA *Cerro Gordo* (KLP).

Fox Sparrow: First: 17 Mar at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 30 on 4 Apr at Two Waters WA *Worth* (PH). One 18 May at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* was described as a "ratty-looking" or "sick or distressed" (DEC-details) [record late].

Lincoln's Sparrow: First: 19 Apr at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). Most: 12 on 9 May at Rice L *Winnebago* (PH). Last: 27 May at Mason City (RGo).

White-throated Sparrow: Last: 4 on 13 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 3 on 15 May at Hickory Hill Pk *Johnson* (CE).

Harris's Sparrow: Most: 24 on 4 May at Smith L *Kossuth* (MCK). The last straggler lingered through the end of the period at Ann Johnson's yard *Warren* [record late].

White-crowned Sparrow: First: 2 on 18 Apr at Gitchie Manitou NA *Lyon* (DEC). Last: 14 May at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK).

Dark-eyed Junco: Last: 9 May in *Winnebago* (PH). In an effort to accurately delineate the occurrence of the Pink-sided race in Iowa, two documented reports were referred to the Records Committee.

Lapland Longspur: Most: 100 or more were found in early Mar in *Grundy*, *Cerro Gordo*, and *Warren* (MPr, RGo, JGi) and 1,000 were in two flocks 24 Mar in *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 12 on 15 Apr at Union Slough NWR *Kossuth* (MCK).

Smith's Longspur: All reports were from the Cone M *Louisa* area: 35 on 3 Apr (BSc), 100 on 4 Apr (CJC), and 200 on 4 Apr (CE).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: First: a male 23 Apr at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* (Lindsay Lee fide DC).

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK: Two reports were referred to the Records Committee.

Blue Grosbeak: First: 9 May in *Pottawattamie* (MOR).

LAZULI BUNTING: All: One or two were found 15–18 May at a feeder in *Plymouth* (*BFH-ph), 19–26 May at a Spirit Lake *Dickinson* feeder (ETH-ph), and a different individual at that location 28–29 May (ETH-ph).

Indigo Bunting: First: 29 Apr in *Linn* (DP).

Dickcissel: First: 1 May in both *Johnson* (CE) and *Greene* (JJD).

Bobolink: First: 1 May in *Johnson* (CE) and 7 on 1 May at Medicine Creek WA *Wayne* (AB). 187 were counted at Medicine Creek WA 18 May (AB).

Eastern Meadowlark: One was singing 6 Mar in *Warren* (JGi).

Western Meadowlark: Two were singing 8 Mar at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (GLV).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: First: 9 Apr at Big Wall L *Wright* (SSP, KLP). Hard to find in *Appanoose*, one was at Sedan Bottoms 15 May (RLC). Fifteen were seen

30 May at a newly created marsh at L Macbride *Johnson* (CE).

Rusty Blackbird: Most: 200 on 23 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (CJC) and 150 on 29 Mar in *Worth* (PH). Last: 22 Apr at Chichaqua WA *Polk* (DK).

Brewer's Blackbird: All: 2 on 28 Mar at Hanlontown M *Worth* (PH-details), 3 on 10 Apr at New L *Woodbury* (BFH), and 2 on 7 May at Cedar Hills Sand Prairie *Black Hawk* (*Walt Stephenson) [third latest].

Great-tailed Grackle: Reported from *Warren*, *Clay*, *Polk*, *Poweshiek*, *Cerro Gordo*, *Woodbury*, *Black Hawk*, *Story*, *Johnson*, *Clinton*, and *Wright*. Most: 15 birds with three nests 23 May at Banner WA *Warren* (AB).

Orchard Oriole: First: 2 on 3 May in *Lee* (CE). Most: 9 on 25 May at Elk Creek M *Worth* (PH).

Baltimore Oriole: First: 27 Apr at Iowa City *Johnson* (JLF), and 28 May at both Oak Grove Pk *Sioux* (JVD) and in *Lucas* (MPr).

Purple Finch: The 52 birds counted 2 Mar at Springbrook SP *Guthrie* (ETH) were as many as the other 10 reports combined. Last: 3 May at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Common Redpoll: There were a few holdovers from the "invasion": 8 Mar at Brooklyn *Poweshiek* (MPr), 2 on 13 Mar at Ankeny *Polk* (DK), and 16–17 Mar at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Pine Siskin: All: 10 Mar to 1 Apr at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, CJF), 16–18 Mar at Iowa City *Johnson* (RH, JPB), 2 on 1 May at Iowa City (JLF), and 4 on 9 May at Fairmount Cem *Scott* (DR).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: There was a report of 18 on 19 Mar in *Muscatine* (RIA, PHA), otherwise only 1–6 birds were reported from the Cone M *Louisa* and *Johnson* areas (THK, CE, DR).



Marbled Godwit at Polk City Wildlife Area, Polk Co., 14 April 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.



Belted Kingfisher at Hooper Wildlife Area, Warren Co., 24 April 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.



Barred Owl at Oak Grove Recreation Area, Saylorville Lake, Polk Co., 9 May 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.



Willet at wetlands south of Cumming, Warren Co., 9 May 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.



Black Tern at wetlands south of Cumming, Warren Co., 26 May 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.



Virginia Rail in Norwalk backyard, Warren Co., 10 May 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

COMMENT

This is the first effort at compiling Field Reports using the online data entry system designed by Ann Johnson at www.iowabirds.org. Approximately 60% of the contributors used this method for sending field reports, and their sightings made up about 75% of the almost 2,400 I used to write this report. This system makes it easy for birders to add their observations to our database as soon as they make them, as well as saves editors time entering data at the end of the season. Thanks to Ann for making this possible, and thanks to those of you who used the web site. Please send any comments or suggestions for improving the process to Ann or myself.

This database will only increase in usefulness as time goes on and as more birders use it. Gathering field data is an important function of the IOU, but our coverage of the state is spotty because of our small membership and the even smaller number of birders who send in field reports. A full 60% of the spring sightings used to derive this report was sent in by only 11 contributors. I encourage everyone to try the new online system to add to our collective knowledge of Iowa birds.

CONTRIBUTORS (* = documentation only)

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Report of the Records Committee for 2003

Ann M. Johnson

The Records Committee reviewed 30 records from 2003; of these, 26 were accepted and four were not. One old record from 1989 was reviewed for the first time and was accepted. Hooded Oriole was added to the state list (#407).

Committee members for 2003 with years in which their terms expire were Paul Hertzler (2003), Jim Sinclair (2004), Thomas H. Kent (2005), Lee Schoenewe (2006), James J. Dinsmore (2007), Aaron Brees (2008), and Ann M. Johnson (secretary, appointed by the committee). Matt Kenne was nominated by the committee and appointed by the IOU Board of Directors to fill a regular term beginning in 2004.

As field identification techniques continue to become more sophisticated, there is more interest in identifying some birds to the subspecific level. The committee is beginning to look at some of these records, such as the Audubon's subspecies of Yellow-rumped Warbler (03-09), to better define the avifauna of the state.

The four-digit number (year and sequence number) assigned to each record reviewed by the Records Committee is included for future reference. Records are classified as follows: A = Accepted (-S = specimen, -P = photograph, -R = recording, -D = documentation) and NA = Not Accepted. To be Accepted, a record must receive seven votes on the initial review or six votes on a subsequent review. The subcategories A-S, A-P, and A-R indicate that physical evidence supports the identification, and records are subclassified based on a majority vote. References to *IBL* are the page of the Field Reports in *Iowa Bird Life* where the record is cited. P- numbers refer to the IOU Photo File entry number. Published notes and previous citations may contain more details. An * indicates a previously uncited documentation.

2003 RECORDS ACCEPTED

Barrow's Goldeneye: 22 Mar at New Lake in Woodbury Co. (03-02, *IBL* 73:78).

Laughing Gull: 11 Oct at Saylorville Res. in Polk Co. (03-22, *IBL* 74:15).

Little Gull: 21 to 22 Apr at Coralville Res. in Johnson Co. (03-03, P-1018, *IBL* 73:80) and 29 Apr at Spirit L. in Dickinson Co. (03-06, *IBL* 73:80).

Black-headed Gull: 2 Aug at Spirit L. in Dickinson Co. (03-17, *IBL* 74:16).

Mew Gull: 23 Oct at Red Rock Res. in Marion Co. (03-25, *IBL* 74:16).

Iceland Gull: 22 Dec at Linger Longer Rest Area in Lee Co. (03-30, *IBL* 74:44).

Ferruginous Hawk: 14 Oct at Union Hills WMA in Cerro Gordo Co. (03-24, *Carolyn Fischer, *IBL* 74:13) and 10 Dec and 18 Dec at Hitchcock N.A. in Pottawattamie Co. (03-28 and 03-29, *IBL* 74:43).

Black-necked Stilt: 5 May at New Lake in Woodbury Co. (03-07, *IBL* 73:79) and 16 May near Spencer in Clay Co. (03-11, *IBL* 73:79).

Whimbrel: 27 May at Cardinal M. in Winneshiek Co. (03-14, *IBL* 73:80).

Red Knot: 1 to 9 Sep at Red Rock Res. in Marion Co. (03-18, *IBL* 74:14) and 8 to 14 Sep at Johnston in Polk Co. (03-20, *IBL* 74:14).

Ruff: 7 May northeast of Jefferson in Greene Co. (03-08, *Mike Overton, *IBL* 73:80).

Red Phalarope: 14 Sep at Owego Wetlands in Woodbury Co. (03-21, *IBL* 74:15).

Burrowing Owl: 20 Apr to 20 Jul southeast of Percival in Fremont Co. (03-15, P-1022, *IBL* 73:134).

Selasphorus Hummingbird: 3 Sep in Plymouth Co. (03-19, *Bill Huser, *IBL* 74:17).
Varied Thrush: 13 Oct at Ames in Story Co. (03-23, *IBL* 74:19).
Bohemian Waxwing: 22 Nov in Clayton Co. (03-26, *IBL* 74:19).
Yellow-rumped [Audubon's] Warbler: 11 May at Ledges S. P. in Boone Co. (03-09, *IBL* 73:84).
Black-headed Grosbeak: 26 Jan to 2 February southwest of Danville in Des Moines Co. (03-01, P-1017, *IBL* 73:37,86).
Lazuli Bunting: 15 May at Algona in Kossuth Co. (03-10, *IBL* 73:86) and 25 May at Spirit L. in Dickinson Co. (03-12, P-1019, *IBL* 73:86).
Hooded Oriole: 25 May at Fairbank in Buchanan Co. (03-13, P-1020, *IBL* 73:86).

OLD RECORDS REVIEWED FOR THE FIRST TIME AND ACCEPTED

Burrowing Owl: 22 Jul 1989 near Waterloo in Black Hawk Co. (03-AA, P-1021, *IBL* 73:134).

2003 RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

California Gull: Because the mantle color was noted as light gray and not even slightly darker than nearby Ring-billeds and Herrings, some members thought that a small, subadult Herring Gull could not be ruled out (03-27, *IBL* 74:16).
Burrowing Owl: While there was evidence of possible nesting in a northwest Iowa field, no bird was ever observed by the reporter. A second-hand description was too brief to be conclusive (03-16, *IBL* 73:134).
Fish Crow: This species continues to be problematic for the committee since calls are difficult to describe well enough to differentiate them from begging young or female American Crows (03-04, *IBL* 73:82).
Common Raven: A sighting by an observer with much experience with ravens was intriguing but lack of some critical details left too much doubt as to species. The committee was unsure if this was a Common Raven, a sick American Crow, or perhaps a Chihuahuan Raven (03-05, *IBL* 73:82).

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Hitchcock Nature Area Hawk Watch Report, Fall 2003

Mark Orsag and Jerry Toll

OVERALL SUMMARY

The Hitchcock Nature Area (HNA) hawk watch was conducted from 15 August 2003 to 20 December 2003. This was an important year organizationally for the hawk watch, as we finally reached the promised land of full coverage. This was due to the hard work of the HNA staff (Brett Ford, Chad Graeve, Tina Popson, and Carol Young) and the dedication of Jerry Toll who served as our paid hawk counter/educator this season. On the whole, it was a pretty good but somewhat mixed season for migrants. About half of our twenty listed (as in recorded previously at Hitchcock) raptor and vulture species (Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, and Prairie Falcon) posted solidly average

to excellent numbers. The other half posted slightly below average to disastrous numbers with one species, the accidental Black Vulture, missing altogether. With over 600 hours of coverage this season, we had also hoped to crack the 10,000 raptor/vulture barrier for the first time. As it was, we fell just short — 9,772 raptors and vultures of 19 species were counted as they headed south past HNA. While the extra coverage produced numerous season records, only one new day record (10 Rough-legged Hawks on 16 December 2003) was produced. Passage rates declined this season because increased hawk-watching time included days when the weather was less favorable for migrating raptors.

The season's start in August was very slow with hot weather predominating; many days also lacked strong winds from any direction. Any southbound movement in August was probably of a fairly "broad-front" nature and Hitchcock's hawk watchers saw precious little of it. Counts for the month fell well short of 200 birds. What southbound movement there was consisted of mostly immature Turkey Vultures with a sprinkling of raptors; a few Mississippi Kites were the only real highlights of the month. Nonraptors were not moving in great numbers either; early season migrants such as Common Nighthawks and American White Pelicans were making less than impressive showings. Fairly average movements of Eastern Kingbirds and Chimney Swifts and the appearance of a few mild surprises (such as three Forster's Terns on 15 August) failed to overcome the sense that the nonraptors were slow out of the gate as well.

The first decent raptor day came on 29 August, when the back side of a low-pressure system brought 10 to 15 mph north winds in its wake. While the 40+ birds seen that day were a welcome change from the rest of the month's slow flight, what was truly extraordinary was this little flight's diversity — 11 raptor/vulture species! The Northern Harrier (2), Broad-winged Hawk (5), and Swainson's Hawk (11) made their 2003 debuts on 29 August.

Early September began rather slowly also. Two of the first 12 days of the month were completely lost to rain or fog, and few of the remaining days produced much in the way of migration. The one nonraptor bright spot was the exceptionally strong showing by Red-headed Woodpeckers during their traditional peak period in the first third of September. Their flight was divided essentially evenly between adults and juveniles. Past flight ratios heavily favored adults, so this may have been a highly productive year for this species in terms of breeding success. Two of the more notable raptor flights occurred on 3 September, when 74 raptors and vultures of five species (including six Ospreys) moved through, and on 12 September when 97 Turkey Vultures spearheaded a total flight of 116 raptors and vultures.

Raptor and nonraptor numbers continued to be moderate through the mid-September period with perhaps the most memorable day coming on 18 September when fairly strong south winds sparked a low altitude push of 88 raptors and vultures of eight species. What was truly memorable about this day, however, was the number of migrating Chimney Swifts that developed over about a two-hour period in the late morning. They were tacking into the wind, gliding, using updrafts, and moving in what was a fairly narrow band of air right over the lodge. Jerry Toll's count that day of this stream of swifts was a conservative 4,000.

The real start of the Hitchcock season is often viewed as 20 September because this is when raptor numbers traditionally begin to spike. In 2003, the timing was exact. As another low pressure system moved through, temperatures climbed and steady southeast winds whipped over Hitchcock's ridges. These conditions produced the first good day of the season on 20 September when 211 raptors and vultures of nine species moved through low, tacking into the southeasterly wind and giving observers on the Badger Hill counting

point some great close-in views. This flight was dominated by Turkey Vultures (111), but Broad-winged Hawks (38) and Sharp-shinned Hawks (31) also made good showings. The latter often passed Badger Hill at below eye-level, at times skimming inches above the grass on the hillsides below the counters. American White Pelicans (668) straggled through, above the hawks and vultures, in meandering kettles, and Chimney Swifts (1,000) also buzzed by (sometimes within a few feet of the Badger Hill counters). When two Mourning Warblers were found lurking in a brush pile directly below Badger Hill late in the afternoon, a truly enjoyable day was complete. The cork was now out of the bottle, and three of the next five days saw flights of 100+ raptors and vultures.

The last five days of September were nothing short of outstanding as a slow moving but fairly strong Pacific frontal system brought dropping temperatures and stronger (mostly northwest) winds. Daily raptor/vulture totals over this span were 253, 345, 289, 352, and 911, respectively. Migrants of all kinds were on the move over Hitchcock: Turkey Vultures, Swainson's Hawks, and Red-tailed Hawks were joined by large numbers of Blue Jays, Franklin's Gulls, American White Pelicans, and Double-crested Cormorants. Both *buteo* species plowed though a bit early, but the Swainson's Hawk peak would prove to be somewhat shallow in comparison to the stronger and later flights of the years 2000 and 2002. The best day of the entire 2003 season for numbers of migrating birds was 30 September — 911 raptors and vultures of 12 species were counted with Swainson's Hawks (522) and Red-tailed Hawks (206) predominating. The Swainson's Hawks, perhaps because they were a day or two ahead of what we have come to expect, uncharacteristically really took their time, kiting and kettling over Hitchcock's ridges and mingling with Turkey Vultures and other raptors. For a couple of moments during the afternoon, between 200 and 300 raptors and vultures soared together above Hitchcock. Such moments are truly why those of us who spend so many hours in the fall at HNA keep coming back for more! Interestingly, few nonraptors found conditions on 30 September favorable, with only Blue Jays (386) migrating in large numbers.

October began with a steady if unspectacular push of raptors. On 1 October, a balanced flight of 192 raptors of nine species moved through with Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawks, Swainson's Hawks, and Sharp-shinned Hawks predominating. The light northwest winds that day also brought in the season's first Northern Goshawk. Another Pacific cold front moved through on 4 October. That day was Hitchcock's 2003 Hawk Fest, and the hawks responded with 287 raptors and vultures moving south over HNA. Turkey Vultures (106) and Red-tailed Hawks (90) dominated this flight with Swainson's Hawks (44) and Sharp-shinned Hawks (23) also putting in decent showings. A close-in Peregrine Falcon provided the day's highlight. Nonraptors included 360 American White Pelicans and 18 Yellow-rumped Warblers.

After a solid beginning for October, which had 100+ flights on six out of the first seven days, two slower days followed. A more active weather system moved in on 10 October, however, just in time for the Iowa Ornithologists' Union (IOU) fall meeting. As Iowa's birding elite began to arrive at the lodge on Friday afternoon, the leading edge of a solid mid-October pulse of raptors and vultures was beginning to move through. The migration on 10 October ended with 178 raptors and vultures of six species. Loose kettles of Turkey Vultures dominated this low altitude flight into south winds. Two Merlins, including a well-seen "Taiga" (*columbarius*) male, were the day's highlights. Rain shut down the flight and washed out the field trips on Saturday morning. In the early afternoon, however, the showers subsided, the sun came out, and raptors, vultures, and other migrants headed south.

Turkey Vultures (99), Sharp-shinned Hawks (77), Red-tailed Hawks (55), Swainson's Hawks (22), and American Kestrels (17) dominated a flight of 291 raptors and vultures of 10 species. A Northern Goshawk was seen by many watchers from both observation points and proved to be the day's highlight. The nonraptor flight also was strong: 3,870 Double-crested Cormorants, 1,495 Blue Jays, 513 American Crows, 474 Canada Geese, and 110 Northern Pintails.

The flight on 12 October into southwest winds was even better for raptors and (especially) vultures. Eleven species and 341 individuals were counted with the highlights being three Merlins and yet another Northern Goshawk. Turkey Vultures dominated this flight with a count of 131, plus 113 Red-tailed Hawks and 66 Sharp-shinned Hawks. A highlight of the IOU weekend was the designation of Hitchcock Nature Area as Iowa's first official Important Bird Area. After a one-day lull, another Pacific cold front moved through and the birds filled the air again on 14 October with 380 raptors and vultures of eleven species. These included 184 Red-tailed Hawks, 132 Turkey Vultures, and 42 Sharp-shinned Hawks. This day brought an unusual number of the more sought after species — two Merlins, another Northern Goshawk, and the season's first Prairie Falcon. The nonraptor flight was dominated by Double-crested Cormorants (4,297), American Crows (1,195), and Ring-billed Gulls (235). An injured Song Sparrow found near the lodge served as a reminder of how perilous migration is for birds.

The next big push was triggered not by a cold front, but by a strong low pressure system that brought gusty south winds and temperatures that eventually rose into the 80s. It seems counter-intuitive, but these sorts of conditions often trigger strong flights in the early and mid-season at HNA. On 17 October, there was a flight of 376 raptors and vultures of nine species. A season-high 208 Turkey Vultures were joined by 133 Red-tailed Hawks and 25 Sharp-shinned Hawks as the dominant species in the flight. The flight on 18 October was even better. It was a clear, calm hot day; temperatures, however, were cool in the morning (though they reached 85 degrees by mid-afternoon). Thus, thermals were definitely present but never got so strong that the birds "vanished" into the cloudless sky. Movement between about 10:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. was so constant that the counters were in a befuddled, exhausted, and excited state by the end of the day! At 4 p.m., the thermals apparently died and the flight abruptly ceased. By then, however, 544 raptors and vultures of eight species had passed overhead: Red-tailed Hawks (322) and Sharp-shinned Hawks (129) had posted season-high numbers, and Turkey Vultures (64) and Northern Harriers (18) had also posted solid showings. The nonraptor flight had been diverse and balanced with American Crows (1,500) leading the way.

The next seven days of October had flights of 70 or more raptors and vultures. The best day of this stretch was 25 October when a Golden Eagle was the highlight of a day that featured a fairly strong push of Red-tailed Hawks along with a strong flight of nonraptors: 4,000 American Crows, 2,000 Red-winged Blackbirds, and 1,500 Common Grackles. The end of October brought several days of the dreaded combination of cloudy skies and easterly winds. The first three days of November saw similarly poor conditions and very poor hawk numbers. Things finally perked up a bit on 4 November when strong northwest winds blowing steadily at up to 25 mph had some birds moving despite overcast conditions. There were 93 hawks and eagles of seven species that moved through with Red-tailed Hawks (52), Bald Eagles (15), and a season-high 20 Northern Harriers dominating the raptor flight. This was a day, however, that was dominated by other migrants: 1,725 Snow Geese, 4,375 American Crows, 671 Ring-billed Gulls, 2,200 American Robins, 10,500

Common Grackles, an astonishing 1,100 Rusty Blackbirds, and, for good measure, a Bonaparte's Gull, a Herring Gull, and a late Great Egret.

The next late-season push developed on 8 November, a day of mild temperatures and light variable winds. At first, this hardly seemed the sort of day that would produce much movement, but it did. The birds were far out over the Missouri Valley and high up riding thermals, but the conditions were clear and sunny, and the hawk watchers present that day quickly learned to favor scopes over binoculars. By the end of the day, 155 raptors of six species had been tallied with Bald Eagles leading the way (78) closely followed by Red-tailed Hawks (67). A good showing of five Rough-legged Hawks nearly tied the old (1999) day record (6) and prefaced things to come later in the 2003 season. There were 3,500 American Crows and 5,000 Common Grackles that flew south with the raptors. As usual, we picked raptors out of the streams of crows. Things slowed down again until 15 November, which is the date of the annual "Eagle Fest" at Hitchcock. As opposed to "Eagle Fest" 2002, there were actually migrant eagles passing through in 2003. By the end of the day, we had tallied 40 Bald Eagles, 29 Red-tailed Hawks, and a handful of other raptors. American Robins (9,000) and American Crows (2,850) were seen and a close-in group of 17 Brewer's Blackbirds provided an unexpected treat.

Northwest winds whipped the watch again on 18 November, as a flight of 122 raptors of six species pushed through in the chilly conditions. Bald Eagles (55) and Red-tailed Hawks (52) led the way with Snow Geese (5,000) the most prominent nonraptor migrant. Conditions remained slow until a stronger Pacific front put the deep freeze on the Great Plains. On 23 November, we saw clouds of Snow Geese in the air heading south from DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge; our Snow Goose count for that day was a season-high 250,000! Also, 74 Bald Eagles, a Golden Eagle, and a Sandhill Crane were seen. Good thermalling conditions, with light northwest winds, brought about a Bald Eagle bonanza on 25 November. That day, 120 raptors including 102 Bald Eagles moved through — one kettle found by Karen Barnett included 18 of these magnificent raptors! The end of the month featured several days with northwest winds, but the "migratory pipeline" seemed empty and temperatures remained stubbornly in the low 40s.

December also started off slowly with cloudy calm conditions and light southerly winds. Single-digit flights often prevailed until 10 December when a strong cold front moved through over the wintry snowscape of the Loess Hills and Missouri River Valley. That day, 62 hawks and eagles of five species moved through. This flight was, as expected, dominated by Bald Eagles (38) and Red-tailed Hawks (21), but the bird of the day was an adult dark-morph Ferruginous Hawk. Geese were on the move south as well with 3,970 Snow Geese and 734 Canada Geese recorded. After this brief burst, however, the pace of migration really slowed. On 14 December, fog enveloped the lodge with only glimpses of the near valley visible from time to time and the Missouri Valley completely shrouded in mist and clouds. At one point, however, an adult Bald Eagle suddenly appeared out of the ghostly fog near the lodge and apparently targeted Lightning (one of Hitchcock's two canine residents), who was wandering from the lodge toward the parking lot. Lightning saw the eagle moving toward her and hid under a parked SUV! The eagle pulled up over the vehicle and continued south.

The next strong cold front whipped through on 16 December, and the birds were flying again. The mix of 67 hawks and eagles of five species moved through reflecting the "lateness" of the flight: 42 Bald Eagles, 13 Red-tailed Hawks, and a new single-day record of

10 Rough-legged Hawks. A Golden Eagle was an added bonus along with such late-season nonraptors as Snow Geese (8,300), Canada Geese (209), and Purple Finches (134). The season's final big flight on 18 December was, fittingly, probably 2003's coldest day for hawk watchers, who were forced to shelter behind the corner of the lodge away from the pounding and bone-chilling northwest winds. That day, 90 hawks and eagles passed by with Bald Eagles (53) dominating the flight; Red-tailed Hawks (22), and Rough-legged Hawks (7) also made good showings. Rarities were the highlight of this day, however, with a light-morph immature Ferruginous Hawk and two Prairie Falcons putting in appearances. Clem Klaphake and Jerry Toll also witnessed an estimated 4.5 mile chase that pitted a hungry Bald Eagle against a lone Snow Goose, which, in the end, escaped the eagle. The last two days of the count were something of an anticlimax after this last very memorable "big" day on 18 December. That includes even the Christmas Count on 20 December that turned up Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Killdeer, and an unexpected winter resident Northern Harrier.

Post-season thanks are in order to a host of people this season. First and foremost, our heartfelt thanks go out to the HNA staff — Brett Ford, Chad Graeve, Tina Popson, and Carol Young — who show continuing dedication to and vision for HNA and are an inspiration for all of us.

Without the "Hitchcock regulars," the intrepid band of hawk watchers who are most frequently the ones suffering through scorching early September heat or a bone-chilling mid-November "Alberta Clipper," there wouldn't be a hawk watch at Hitchcock. Thus, Jerry Toll (Hitchcock's paid counter and educator this year), Sue Mattix, Clem "Hard Luck" Klaphake (whose bad-weather hawkless Thursdays this season were the stuff of legend), Don and Janis Paseka, Don Maas, Jim Meyer (who once again gave up vacation time to look for Swainson's Hawks), Mark Orsag, Pat Williams, Babs and Loren Padelford (our hawk watch's founders), Karen Barnett (whose luck with hawk watching was much better than her luck with her softball team), Carr Heaney (who was a regular Monday observer), Sandy Reinken (whose hawk watching skills grew by leaps and bounds in a few short months), and Mary Kramer (who has a pet deer and probably wouldn't turn down a pet Bald Eagle) all deserve thanks and acknowledgement for their consistent dedication to a worthy enterprise.

A host of other people lent their time, skills, and support this year: Lee Schoenewe, Aaron Brees, Ann Johnson, Paul Hertzell, Ric Zarwell, Jim Sinclair (and everyone else from IOU!), Bob Fuchs, Janet Greer, Cliff and Donna Rahel, Rick Schmid, John Hall, Robert and Linda Johnson, Laurine Blankenau, John and Marilyn Mancini, Karen Kahle, John Bissell, Wayne Nicholas, Phil Holland, Howard Mattix, Richard Pochard, Phil Hahn, Dick Reyer, Al Reyer, Cynthia Reyer, Lynea Hinchman, Betsy Finch, Denise Lewis, Paul Tebbel, Elaine Bachel, Nancy Hinnah (and everyone else from Nebraska Raptor Recovery), Kay Neumann, Kim Jarvis, and many others too numerous to name all contributed, in one way or another, to our collective efforts. We also met a lot of nice people this year from Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, and three or four other states and two foreign countries, who were on field trips from area birding groups, at the IOU Fall Meeting, at Hitchcock's "Hawk Fest" and "Eagle Fest," or at the Nebraska Raptor Recovery Fundraiser. Thanks for coming and hope to see you again this fall!

And now, the numbers . . .

Table 1. Hitchcock Nature Area hawk watch totals, fall 2003, for 113* days; weighted hours equal 636* (two counting points staffed plus adjusted unweighted hours)

| Species | Number |
|--|---------------------|
| Black Vulture | 0 |
| Turkey Vulture | 2,812* |
| Mississippi Kite | 9 |
| Bald Eagle | 908* |
| Osprey | 66 |
| Northern Harrier | 218 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 948* |
| Cooper's Hawk | 169 |
| Northern Goshawk | 9 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 6 |
| Swainson's Hawk (2 dark and 4 rufous morphs) | 1,059 |
| Broad-winged Hawk | 121 |
| Red-tailed Hawk (39 Harlan's [including 3 light morphs], 23 western dark morphs, 3 western rufous morphs, 8 Krider's, and 14 dark morph red-tails [indeterminate between western and Harlan's]) | 3,132* |
| Ferruginous Hawk** (1 dark-morph adult and one light-morph immature) | 2* |
| Rough-legged Hawk (7 dark morphs) | 59* |
| Golden Eagle | 17 |
| American Kestrel | 130 |
| Merlin (both <i>columbarius</i> and <i>richardsonii</i> forms recorded) | 25 |
| Peregrine Falcon (both <i>tundrius</i> and <i>anatum</i> forms recorded) | 25 |
| Prairie Falcon** | 4 |
| Unidentified raptor | 53 |
| Total | 9,772 (19 species)* |
| Total per weighted hour | 15.4 |

* Denotes new season record.

** Denotes a species requiring documentation and IOU Records Committee approval in Iowa.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS:

Black Vulture (0). We missed this one this season. The IOU-accepted record from 22 September 2002 remains the only record for this species at HNA.

Turkey Vulture (2,812). The year 2003 proved to be a breakout year for this species — something that had been anticipated for a couple of years. Passage rates shot to over 4 birds/hour despite the possible overall downward effect on passage rates discussed earlier. This year's season total was an amazing new record. The peak flight came very late this year; 208 vultures were counted on 17 October. The last bird was recorded just six days later on the fairly typical date of 23 October. This species is clearly becoming a more common breeder on the northern Great Plains. Their movement past Hitchcock may be undergoing a temporal shift as well. Almost as many birds were counted in October as in September; this seems to be the continuation and strengthening of a trend that has been observed the last several seasons.

Mississippi Kite (9). We thought we had the Mississippi Kite's migration pattern at HNA all figured out, but 2003 proved that this wasn't quite so. This is a very uncommon early season migrant, and this season's drought conditions and the fast early start in August had many of us anticipating a big year for this species. Alas, it was not to be. Numbers and passage rates dropped, adult birds were nearly impossible to find, and the flight was atypically more or less over by 1 September. The first two kites (including the only adult of the season) showed up on 22 August. The only non-August bird was counted on 23 September; this was a fairly typical late date. The peak flight of three occurred early on 28 August. We have always believed that drought conditions on the southern Great Plains caused Mississippi Kites to disperse northward in late summer in unusually large numbers; Hitchcock's hawk watchers then recorded these birds on their way south for the winter. While 2003's results don't invalidate the "drought theory" completely of kite migration at Hitchcock, they do demonstrate that it may need to be refined.

Bald Eagle (908). Despite a decline in passage rates, 1.84 in 2002 vs. 1.43 in 2003, this was still a pretty good year for Bald Eagles. As with all species this year, passage rates were negatively affected by the shift to full coverage. The first bird passed through on 13 September, and there was a strong push of 53 as late as 18 December. Some certainly continue to trickle south after the traditional end of the season on 20 December. November was again the big month this year with the peak flight of 102 coming on 25 November.

Osprey (66). The Osprey flight was quite poor this year. Overall numbers were down from 71 Ospreys in 2002 despite the vastly increased coverage hours. What happened to passage rates can be imagined. Karen Barnett, Jerry Toll, and Mark Orsag did see an Osprey carrying a fish this season — a rare sight at Hitchcock. The early bird of the 2003 season flew by on 15 August. Peak flights of seven on 16 and 17 September showed fairly typical timing and volume. The surprise of the season was the new late date provided by a bird seen by Jerry Toll on 2 December.

Northern Harrier (218). This was an above average year for this species. This season's total was the second best ever at HNA. Passage rates did dip slightly (0.36 birds/hour in 2002 to 0.34 birds/hour in 2003). Because this species often flies in inclement or simply unfavorable conditions shunned by other raptors, the harrier count probably benefited more from the increased coverage than most others. The Northern Harrier logged in as the sixth most abundant raptor migrant at HNA in 2003 — an uncharacteristically high placement. The two early birds showed up punctually on 29 August, and the late bird moved through with similarly typical timing on 10 December. A wintering individual was found just north and east of Hitchcock by Christmas counter Janet Greer on 20 December. The peak flight of 20 was typical in volume but a little on the late side (4 November). This year's decent showing calls into some question the apparent pattern of decline for this species at HNA. The coming years should provide more definitive clues as to the health of Northern Harrier populations north of HNA.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (948). This constituted a new season record, by one, over 2000. Passage rates were, however, notably lower. The early bird was on 2 September, and the last day of the watch on 20 December was graced by a clearly southbound bird. The peak flight was a bit late (18 October) but not without precedent in its timing. The peak flight volume was above average (129); this was the second best one-day flight in HNA history. Numbers for this species at HNA seem to demonstrate a little less annual variability than at many other hawk watch sites.

Cooper's Hawk (169). This species posted poor numbers in 2003. Passage rate declines were steep, and even the overall numbers were inferior to those of recent seasons. The late migrant bird passed by on 2 November. The peak flight of 13 was shallow in volume but fairly typical in timing (20 September). One bird was found wintering in the area during the Christmas count on 20 December.

Northern Goshawk (9). This was a surprisingly good showing. Overall numbers were up over 2002 while passage rates held basically steady. The cycle for this species seemed to be headed downward, but we got an increase for this very uncommon migrant instead. Two birds that passed over HNA during the IOU fall meeting can only be described as well-timed. Flight timing and peak volume were all fairly typical. The early bird appeared on 1 October, the late bird on 21 November, and the typically shallow peak flight of two took place right on schedule on 5 November.

Red-shouldered Hawk (6). This is an occasional to rare migrant, and any season where we see more than two or three can be counted a success. Passage rates and overall numbers for this species were up in 2003. The timing of the flight was very typical. The first bird appeared on 26 September. The last moved through on 21 November. The peak flight of two (which ties the single day record) occurred on 11 November.

Broad-winged Hawk (121). What happened to the broad-wings this year is an unsolved mystery. The trend had been slowly but steadily up in recent years, with an unusually strong flight in 2002. This year's total was an unmitigated disaster for Hitchcock's hawk watchers. Numbers and passage rates nose-dived to their lowest level ever at HNA. Broad-winged Hawks were the sixth most abundant raptor at HNA during the fall of 2002 but fell to ninth place in 2003. The 2003 early date for this species was 29 August (5), the late date was 1 October (2); the extremely shallow peak flight of 38 occurred on 20 September.

Swainson's Hawk (1,059). This species showed a marked decline from a record count in 2002, but, again, the total was in the semirespectable low to average range for this site. The birds moved through a bit early, albeit without the alacrity of previous seasons. The somewhat shallow peak flight of 522 occurred on 30 September. The first 11 birds appeared on 29 August and the late bird moved through on 17 October. The latter timing is fairly typical.

Red-tailed Hawk (3,132). This constituted a new season record, but the overall passage rate showed a slight dip even though nearly 1,000 more birds were seen this season. This is still the most abundant migrant raptor at Hitchcock, but if current trends continue, Turkey Vultures will probably equal or outnumber red-tails in the not-too-distant future. The red-tail flight in 2003 was atypical only in the strong early push at the end of September. The 206 red-tails seen on 30 September were truly a surprisingly high count. Peak flight timing and volume (322 on 18 October) were far more typical. October was, as usual, the peak month. The various color morphs also recorded fairly typical numbers with only the Krider's red-tails putting in an unusually strong showing. We found no partial albino birds this year.

Ferruginous Hawk (2). Both individuals came in December this year. This was a new season record. The 10 December bird was an adult dark morph (our second dark bird ever at HNA). The 18 December bird was a light-morph immature. This species is pretty clearly an annual (or at least nearly annual) late season rarity. They are always an exciting, if by now not totally unexpected, find. Their movements past Hitchcock seem to be somewhat related to snow cover. This is something that we'll need to look into in coming years. Both 2003 sightings were submitted to the IOU Records Committee and have been approved.

Rough-legged Hawk (59). This was an “off the charts” year for this species. The 59 birds seen this season were a new record, and passage rates were up strongly as well. Like that of the Ferruginous Hawk, rough-leg migration past Hitchcock seems to have a link to snow cover with good movements of the birds often coming on days with north winds after snow storms in the Omaha/Council Bluffs area. This is something that we will try to chart more precisely in the future. The first rough-leg was a bit late in arriving (26 October), but the big day was to come in December when a new single-day record of 10 rough-legs were seen on 16 December. Besides the sharp increase in overall numbers, there was a second atypical element to this season's flight. The 2002 percentage of dark-morph birds was 30%. This has been fairly typical of rough-leg flights over the years and suggests more of an eastern flavor to Hitchcock's rough-leg mix. (In contrast to other buteos, dark-morph rough-legs are recorded far more often at eastern North American hawk watches than at western ones.) The 2003 percentage of dark-morphs was only 12%; this suggests a more western flavor to this year's flight and probably tells us where, at least generally, this season's “extra” birds came from.

Golden Eagle (17). This uncommon species equaled 2002's record total. Passage rates decreased in 2003. The early bird was a bit earlier than usual on 3 October, and the last bird cleared through on 16 December. They rarely seem to come in bunches, and the shallow peak flights of two on 4 and 11 November were pretty typical in both volume and timing. Golden Eagle numbers show very little annual variation at HNA.

American Kestrel (130). American Kestrel numbers and passage rates nose-dived this year. While there have been worse seasons in terms of overall numbers, the passage rate for 2003 was the lowest ever. The year 2002's excellent flight seems to have been the exception, and this year's poorer showing was probably closer to the norm. Hitchcock just isn't a good watch, volume-wise at least, for falcons. The peak flight of 17 American Kestrels occurred on 11 October. This is pretty typical timing for a bad kestrel year at HNA. In better years, the main push seems to come a bit earlier.

Merlin (25). These fierce little raptors certainly seem to be far more common, in light of IA-Bird listserv reports, in the central and eastern parts of Iowa than they are at Hitchcock. That would make sense, as many of those more easterly migrants and winter residents are probably birds that skirt the western edge of the Great Lakes and then move south. There are several good “Merlin watches” in Wisconsin. As was the case in 2002, we once again bucked earlier trends and saw more “Taiga” (*columbarius*) than “Prairie” (*richardsonii*) Merlins this season — a pity, as the adult male *richardsonii* is certainly one of the most strikingly beautiful raptors in North America. Passage rates were well down in 2003 with overall numbers declining slightly. The early bird's timing was fairly typical on 13 September. The late bird on 7 December was a bit later than usual. The timing and volume of the peak flight (three on 12 October) were, however, very typical.

Peregrine Falcon (25). This was yet another poor showing by a falcon species in 2003. Both passage rates and numbers (from 33 in 2002) were well down. Early and late timing were fairly typical; the first bird passed through on 28 August, and the last bird moved through on 12 October. The peak flight of six on 29 September was a bit early, like that of the Swainson's Hawk (which has a similar migratory timetable at HNA).

Prairie Falcon (4). This total ties the season record set in 1999 and again in 2001. This is yet another species that is occasional to rare at Hitchcock but that posts steady numbers from year to year. Once again, these birds stayed true to form. The first bird appeared on 14 October, the second on 20 October, and the last two on 18 December. The latter sightings

equaled the HNA day record for this species (set last year on 12 October). No surprises here at all. This species requires brief documentation; the requisite information on all four birds was submitted to and approved by the IOU Records Committee.

Unidentified Raptor (53). This total duplicated the 2002 mark exactly. Hopefully, these birds were not the same 53 “that got away” in 2002! Fool us once . . .

There is one last sad note. Thunder, Hitchcock’s beloved “canine hawk watcher” was hit by a car and killed near HNA on the night of 31 December 2003. He’ll certainly be missed most of all by his owners, Chad and Amy Graeve. The hawk watching group, however, will miss him greatly as well. The lodge deck won’t be quite the same without him.

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Two Cerulean Warbler Nests Discovered at Yellow River State Forest in Northeastern Iowa

Shane S. Patterson and Katy L. Patterson

On 15 May 2004, the second day of the IOU’s annual spring meeting, a group of birders set out on a field trip to Yellow River State Forest in Allamakee County. Because of the relatively intact composition of this landscape, seeking out uncommon woodland species was one the expected focal points of our excursion. Several of us had hoped to encounter a considerable variety of warblers, particularly some species that are thinly distributed in other parts of the state.

Shortly after 10 A.M., upon completing a network of trails highlighted by remarkable numbers of Scarlet Tanagers, we set forth to finish our morning at an access point near Paint Creek. While Red-shouldered Hawks called in the distance, we embarked on a trail that led us past horse corrals patrolled by Barn Swallows, around a wooded pond inhabited by Green Herons, and eventually to a bridge spanning the waters of the stream. It was from this last point that Shane Patterson heard a Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) singing. As we listened to this exuberant, buzzy song, hoping to get a feel for the proximity of the bird, several in the group caught a quick glimpse of a female cerulean foraging in a nearby cottonwood. Unsatisfied by this short glimpse, we decided to walk down a wide trail following the creek’s path in anticipation of relocating this bird. Less than 100 meters (m) down the trail, we were again welcomed by Cerulean Warbler song. This time, though, we could see two singing males high within a towering eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*).

After several minutes of watching these birds, Katy Patterson noticed a small nest located about 16 m above the ground in a fork of a small, densely foliated branch of this cottonwood. Several of us then identified a female Cerulean Warbler flitting and hopping along clusters of branches above the nest’s location. This bird soon moved down and landed on the nest, where she proceeded to shape the nest bowl by moving low into the nest and quickly shifting her body from side-to-side (Figure 1). She interspersed this behavior with several feeding trips to adjacent trees, where she generally focused her movements at mod-



Figure 1. *Cerulean Warbler (Dendroica cerulea) female*, 15 May 2004, tending to her nest high in an eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) along Paint Creek at Yellow River State Forest, Allamakee County. This constitutes the seventh nesting record of *Cerulean Warbler* in Iowa. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

erate heights in the woodland canopy. During each return trip, she followed approximately the same route along limbs back to the nest. Although we did not see her carrying nest material at this time, Jay Gilliam noted that he saw this bird adding small bits of spider-web silk to the nest later in the day. Therefore, based on the fact that she was still in the process of building and shaping the nest bowl, it was clear that the egg-laying phase had not yet begun.

Initially, after realizing that we were witnessing some seldom-seen nesting behavior of a relatively rare Iowa bird, we each did our best to describe the nest's location to everyone in the group. Indeed, this task was made much easier by the bird's lively, dynamic behavior on and around the nest, even though we often had to delay our description as she occasionally spent intervals of one to two minutes away from the nest. With some effort,

nearly all interested onlookers were afforded extended looks at the nesting activity of this bird. Fittingly, among the many successful observers in the group was Darwin Koenig, who, in June of 1975, also located an active *Cerulean Warbler* nest (Iowa's second record) within the boundaries of this same state forest (Koenig 1976).

Remarkably, not long after everyone had viewed the nest, Aaron Brees noticed another female *Cerulean Warbler* flitting about in the sprawling canopy of a bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) located only about 30 m from the cottonwood. By following this bird for just a few seconds, he discovered that she was tending to a nest positioned atop a long lateral branch about 11 m off of the ground in the middle level of this oak (Figure 2). Because the nest branch and several adjacent limbs angled directly over the sparsely vegetated hiking trail, this nest site offered comparatively little visual obstruction. Although this may seem unusual for a species of heavily forested locales, the semi-open space below this nest fits with characteristics of *Cerulean Warbler* nest sites from other regions (Bent 1953; Hamel 2000a). In retrospect, the position of nest #2 also made it easier to describe the nest's location to additional observers. A lesser amount of visual obstruction, both from below and through newly emerging oak leaves (as opposed to clumps of fully grown cottonwood leaves) coupled with a more comfortable viewing distance along the trail, made this possible. As a result, many members of our group readily observed both nests.

Like the female at nest #1, this bird made several brief (typically < 5 seconds) visits to her nest, where she actively shaped the nest bowl by turning her body back and forth. Once

again, nest building was not observed until Jay Gilliam did so while photographing the nests in the afternoon. Therefore, since the two females were exhibiting very similar behavior, it is quite possible that both initiated nest-building on the same day. On the other hand, nest #2 had considerably more spider-web silk on the outer lining than nest #1, which still primarily displayed plant fibers and stems on the exterior. Because Cerulean Warblers often use silk as a finishing component (Bent 1953; Baicich and Harrison 1997), this may be an indication that nest #2 was nearer to completion than the first. Construction materials are said to vary among sites, however, and many aspects of nest building, including the identity of finishing materials, have yet to be adequately described (Hamel 2000b). Thus, although it is evident that both nests were at least very close to completion, it was difficult to ascertain exact age.

Cerulean Warblers are known to nest in many types of settings; as Hamel (2000b) stated, this species “can use a great variety of tree species for its breeding habitats.” Bur oak, along with several other *Quercus* species, has been used as a nesting tree in various regions (Saunders 1900; Bent 1953; Hamel 2000a). However, we know of only two other instances where a Cerulean Warbler nest was observed in an eastern cottonwood. Each of these nests was located in the Mississippi River valley of southwestern Tennessee (Paul Hamel, pers. comm., 23 Aug 2004). Such a paucity of records is surprising, considering that cottonwoods are often frequented by Cerulean Warblers in Iowa (Robert Cecil pers. comm., 4 Aug 2004), and have also been identified as nest-season habitat in many other states including Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee (Faanes 1981; Andrie and Carroll 1988; Rosenberg et al. 2000; Hamel in press). Perhaps, due to intermittent flooding that accompanies many cottonwood-dominated locales, observers are precluded from regularly searching active breeding territories. This explanation may also apply to finding nests of other species in lowland riparian areas.

Lastly, these nests represent only the seventh and eighth breeding records of Cerulean Warbler in Iowa. As in this case, nearly all other observations of nesting have come from heavily wooded landscapes in the eastern quarter of the state (Kent and Dinsmore 1996). The only exception occurred five years ago when Lee Schoenewe noted a nest under construction in northwestern Iowa at Wanata State Park (Kent 1999), a site where this species was observed regularly for several years (Dinsmore 2002). Furthermore, considering that this declining species still summers annually in the eastern half of the state, it is likely that



Figure 2. Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*) female, 15 May 2004, approaching her nest in a bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) at Yellow River State Forest, Allamakee County. This constitutes the eighth nesting record of Cerulean Warbler in Iowa. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

Cerulean Warblers nest in at least small numbers every year in Iowa. Careful observations of territorial pairs could yield nesting records on a yearly basis.

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Birding the Shellrock River Greenbelt and Preserve

Rita Goranson

Cerro Gordo County is a diverse area. It includes row crop farms, pastures, small wooded areas, meadows, a large lake, several marshes, and an area along the Shell Rock and Winnebago rivers where the river bottoms, woodlands, and layered limestone bluffs blend to make choice bird watching habitats. The Shellrock Greenbelt area, in particular, is noteworthy, because it is developed for recreational purposes and creates an oasis for migrant birds as well as nesting areas for breeding birds. This article provides an introduction to this area.

The extent of this greenbelt, from county line to county line, includes 770 acres of land that is accessible along the Shell Rock River. This corridor spans approximately 15 miles from the town of Nora Springs to the town of Plymouth and borders Cerro Gordo County's east side. Some of these lands are hunted at various times of the year and some of the land is a preserve with hunting permanently prohibited. The main roads through and along the river are closed in winter and early spring; however, there are alternative routes for accessing these areas during the winter. I will point out the alternative routes after discussing the main route for each section.

This area hosts all kinds of migrant birds as well as local nesters. I will mention only a few species for each area but all could be found in most any section of the greenbelt. Considering the angle of the morning sun, it is generally best to bird from south to north during the summer. I have divided the area into eight sections, starting at the southern end (Figure 1).

From Highway 122 at the west end of Nora Springs the **entrance to the lower part of the greenbelt (1)** will be found. This gravel road meanders through the first section of riparian woodlands. It is about a mile of road and about half way through this section there is an open grassy area. To the west are pines that have produced a number of owl species over the years. As the road curves and goes over a creek, the small woodland and marshy area on both sides has been productive especially for summer warblers, including American Redstarts and Chestnut-sided Warblers. Besides sparrows, migrant thrushes, flycatchers, and accipiters are particularly abundant in this section in spring.

The river road through Section 1 exits at the north end of the section onto 277th Street, which runs east/west. Turn right (east) and cross over the river to gain access to the next section on your left. The river road continues north along the east side of the river. This part is a **wildlife preserve area (2)** and hunting is not allowed. The road meanders through the wooded areas along the river. In the first part of the preserve, tanagers, cuckoos, many warbler species, and many of our resident birds can be seen. The road is rather rough and at times has pot holes, as the lower portion floods periodically. It climbs up and along the bluffs and at this point joins with the primitive campground area, although visitors can not drive into the camping area. That area has to be accessed by the alternative route.

Continuing north of this joining point with the campgrounds, among the trees on the right, there is a stand of pines that are mature and well over 60 feet tall. Despite the fact that this is not typical Long-eared Owl habitat, a Long-eared Owl or two will favor this spot in the winter, and will actually share it with a Great-Horned or Barred Owl, perhaps unknowingly, during the winter months.

Beyond this area, as you continue the drive north, you will encounter a service road that goes to the left. It is blocked to traffic, but walking this road will take you down to the river and to an area that was used for Boy Scout camping years ago. This area is good for warblers in spring. It also provides good looks at some of the limestone bluffs and at Cliff Swallows and their nests in summer. Exploring the area can produce owls, woodpeckers, thrushes, grosbeaks, and other residents.

Back at the road, continue north through the woodland area. In this section, much exploring can be done along the bluffs and in the river bottom areas. Brown Creepers are found in the winter; Red-headed Woodpeckers, tanagers, and other woodland birds are found in spring and fall. Sometimes in the dead of winter or the heat of mid-summer, we are lucky to find a bird here, and then other times we can't keep up with the migrants or

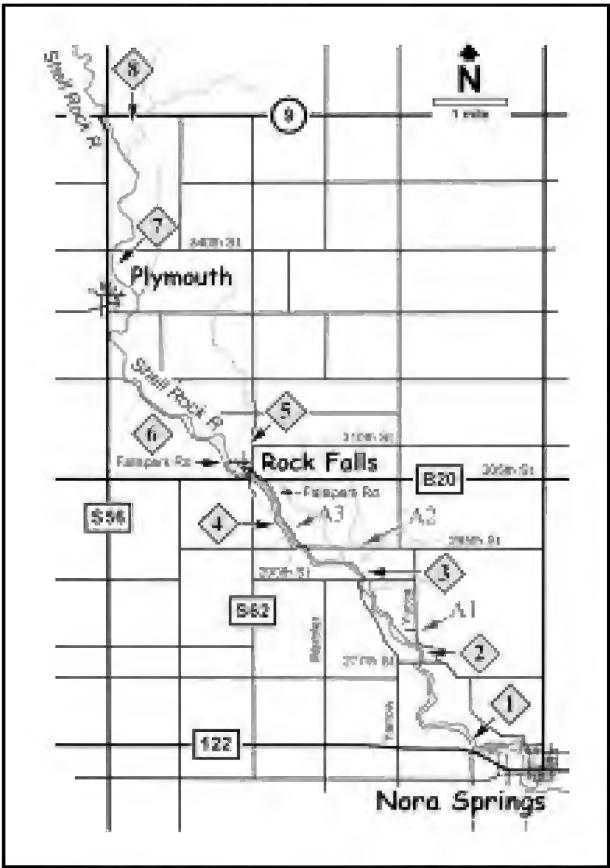


Figure 1. Shellrock River Greenbelt and Preserve: (1) entrance to lower part of the greenbelt, (2) wildlife preserve area, (A1) alternative route 1, (3) the hunted section, (A2) alternative route 2, (4) west side of Shell Rock River; (A3) alternative route 3, (5) entrance to White Wildlife Area, (6) Fallspark Road, (7) Strand Park, (8) Shell Rock River Wildlife Area.

nesters as they forage in the area. The north end of this section has hosted Barred and Great Horned Owls at different times, Goshawks in the pines in the very north area, and eagles and hawks during migration. Toward the end of the route, you will encounter a creek. This is fordable with a four-wheel-drive vehicle or with a two-wheel-drive vehicle once the spring rains are done. You will exit out of the north end onto 290th Street.

Alternative 1 (A1): If the gate is closed at the entrance to Section 2, continue east on 277th Street to Yucca and make a left-hand turn. This road runs north along the eastern perimeter of the preserve, through the outer wooded area. Whip-poor-wills have been heard here in the spring. About one mile up the road there is an entrance on the left to the primitive campgrounds. Along this entrance road, the bushes and shrubs on the right have produced Bell's Vireos several times and expected flycatcher species. Both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles nest in the area around the entrance. To the south along the entrance are pine trees that generally have in residence either a Great-horned Owl or a Barred Owl. Numerous times a Goshawk or other accipiters have used the pines in the winter. At the end of the entrance road there are restrooms and a picnic area. The oaks throughout the picnic area provide protected areas for tents and habitat for Red-headed Woodpeckers and flycatchers. Warblers can be found in this area in migration and entrance to the preserve woods is gained by walking west.

Leaving the camping area, continue along the alternative route by taking a left along Yucca Avenue and continuing until 290th Street. Turn left and drive west about three-quarters of a mile until you see the entrance to the third section on your right. This stretch of road has been good for Wild Turkey and Indigo Bunting. A Red-tailed Hawk or a Great-horned Owl is usually nesting in the oaks on the left side of the road. Shrikes also have been seen in this area.

Back at 290th Street, coming out of the preserve, travel left and before the bridge is the entrance to the next section. This is what we call **the "hunted section" (3)**, because it is heavily hunted in every season that hunting is available. Despite this, it is perhaps our best section for birds. In this area, Townsend's Solitaire, Northern Goshawk, Purple Finch, Long-eared Owl, and Bohemian Waxwing have been found in winter. In spring all species of warblers that migrate through the county can be found here. Thrushes, flycatchers — everyone wants to stop over and enjoy the cedars, pines, water, and open grass areas along the river. Accipiters, cuckoos, Cedar Waxwings, and orioles — it is the hot spot in the area. Just before the wooden bridge there is a path to the right that can be walked to enjoy the beauty of the area and to sight birds. This path is continuous all the way to 295th Street where you can cross the creek on the road and then loop back to the bridge where you started. Along the way are numerous stands of evergreens on both sides of the creek.

Continuing on the road north of the wooden bridge, the route winds through heavy cedars to an open area of grasses which contains several evergreen stands. A pasture adjoins the area where Short-eared Owls have been seen hunting, as well as Northern Harriers. Cuckoos, grosbeaks, and Bobolinks, a strange combination, can be found in this area.

The road comes out at 295th Street. The last section of this area always seems to have nesting Orchard Orioles in summer, Merlins resting in the trees during migration, and sparrows and farmland birds during summer along the east side that borders a farm field.

Alternative 2 (A2): Go east on 290th Street to Yucca and then north to the next intersection, which is 295th Street. Head west and along the road watch for hawks. Once you get to the greenbelt area, which is on the south, you can park and walk in on the path.

It will take you to the wooden bridge on the inner road. Cross the bridge and go back along the opposite path. This is the same walk as mentioned above only done backwards. This walk is not too difficult, except in winter at 30-degree wind chill with six feet of snow, which is then a death march. Back at the car continue to Fallspark Road, watching for Shrikes and Northern Harriers along the road.

When you emerge from the hunted part of the greenbelt on 295th Street, you will head west by making a left turn, proceed across the bridge and take a right turn north along the **west side of the Shell Rock River (4)**. This is the Wilkinson Park and campgrounds road that winds through the park grounds and comes out on S62 at the town of Rock Falls. Following this road will take you along the river over a covered bridge and past a restored prairie area. A Belted Kingfisher generally oversees the pond and orioles, bluebirds, and Bobolinks can be found here. Thrashers, catbirds, Yellow Warblers, and even a Carolina Wren have been seen along this road. The road continues to a camping area with restrooms and picnic tables. The oaks in this area have vireos and warblers moving through them in spring and fall. Going through a gate and onto S62, take a right turn north into town.

Alternative 3 (A3): Instead of emerging onto 295th Street, cross over 295th Street and continue north on Fallspark Road, which continues on the east side of the river as a good gravel road, but one that has little traffic. Spotted Sandpipers like the limestone edges that jut into the river. In about one mile, this will take you to B20 or 305th Street.

In the town of Rock Falls, there is only one main street. County Road S62 goes across the bridge and turns east down this main street, for one block. Here you will want to turn left and go north on Vine which is S62. At 310th Street the entrance to **White Wildlife Area (5)** is on the west. You can park along 310th Street and walk back to this area. The first part is a board walk over the marsh area. Both Virginia Rail and Sora are here spring and fall and Black and Yellow Rail have been seen here in the past. Yellow-headed Blackbirds nest here in the summer. Continue into the woods, where a path will take you around to a second board walk overlooking the marsh at the west end. In the woods are Wood Thrushes, once a White-eyed Vireo was seen here, and many warblers and vireos in spring and fall migration. Whip-poor-wills use the area in spring migration, too. This area can be a paradise for birders or it can be occasionally a bust, but it is always worth the walk around the area because it is so lush and beautiful. Also check out the Rock Falls Cemetery adjacent to the wildlife area on the south side. Crossbills, finches, and siskins can be lurking in the pines in winter.

From White Preserve, return south to Rock Falls on S62 joining with B20, which will take you across the Shell Rock River before heading west. In a short block, **Fallspark Road (6)** extends north along the west side of the river. With only occasional traffic to contend with on the gravel, you will not have to worry about stopping and looking at birds along this route. On the left are farm fields and some tree lots; on the right is the river. This route is particularly good in the spring when warblers are passing through. It has produced a Lazuli Bunting as well as Indigo Buntings, both oriole species, eagles that tend to sit along the river edge, and any accipiter that can be seen during migration. Northern Harriers, a Peregrine Falcon, and other hawks use the farm lands for hunting. At the area on the north end of the road, Brewer's Blackbirds as well as Rusty's are generally seen in the fall.

Fallspark road will emerge at the blacktop S56, where a right-hand turn leads north into the town of Plymouth. Watch the east side of the road as it goes by a curve in the river often used by waterfowl and geese as well as swans. Green-winged Teal, Common Mergansers, and Hooded Mergansers stop at this area as they migrate.

At the north end of the town of Plymouth, turn right into **Strand Park (7)**, which is just prior to 340th Street. The park is on both the east and west side of the river and provides canoe access to the river. It is possible to look up and down the river quite a distance and to see waterfowl or hawks around the river. Surprisingly, Greater White-fronted Geese have been seen on this part of the river. Migrant songbirds use the dense thicket of trees. You can access the east side of the river by going on 340th Street, which is gravel.

One-half mile ahead on 340th Street is the Plymouth Pits Wildlife Area. The north side of this road is in Worth County, as are the pits. There is a nice walking area around the pits, although access to the river is limited.

Return to S56 and turn to the north. You are finished with Cerro Gordo County but you are two miles from Hwy 9 and a small prairie wetland area that is worth checking. County Road S56 stops at Hwy 9. Turn right and go east across the bridge to the parking lot on the south side for the area known as the **Shell Rock River Wildlife Area (8)**. This prairie has wonderful wildflowers and the wetland beyond has been good for shorebirds if the water level isn't too high when the birds come through. Buff-breasted Sandpipers and most of the common shorebirds have been seen in this area. American Bittern, Sora, and Virginia Rail, particularly in spring, can be heard calling. A variety of hawks have been seen hunting the open pastures and prairies. Sharp-tailed and Le Conte's Sparrows like the marshy area during migration.

Thus ends the tour of the Shellrock Greenbelt and Preserve area. While I kept you mostly in Cerro Gordo County, you could continue further north into Worth County along the river and visit areas like the Two Waters Wildlife Area at Kensett. In fact, you could drive all the way to the Minnesota border along the Shell Rock River and find a number of choice birding areas to visit.

With an early start, a good day of birding along this route in the spring can be pure joy. There are always good birds to see here in the summer. Hawk watching in the fall has produced a variety of species. Winter birding along the Shell Rock River can produce some great finds to take away the winter blues.

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Fifty Years Ago in *Iowa Bird Life*

James J. Dinsmore

The September 1954 issue of *Iowa Bird Life* was a skinny 16 pages, one of the thinnest of Fred Pierce's remarkable 30-year tenure as editor. The lead article by Robert Vane was an account of a big day in the Iowa City area. Vane along with Fred Kent and Pete and Marguerite Laude found a total of 120 species on 9 May 1954. A second article by Fred Kent provides a summary of the water birds that he found at Swan Lake in Johnson County in spring and summer 1954. He lists 66 species of water birds including 28 shorebirds that were found there during that time. A third article by Neil Case and George Hendrickson provides a similar summary of the water birds found at Little Wall and Anderson lakes near Jewell in Hamilton County in spring 1954. This paper emphasizes waterfowl (21 species) with data on first and last dates and largest concentrations found. Among the notes is one by William Youngworth summarizing some of his sightings of Blue Grosbeaks, then considered a rare bird in western Iowa.

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) \$15, Goldfinch \$20, Blue-bird \$35, Oriole \$50, Egret \$75, Osprey \$100, Bald Eagle \$250, and Peregrine Falcon \$500+. Additional family members, \$4 per person. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Send subscriptions, membership payments, back issue requests, or address changes to David C. Edwards, 2308 State Avenue, Ames, IA 50014 (Dave@dandje.org).

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS: Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent in Word or WordPerfect to the editor. Research manuscripts will be sent for peer review. Submission of material should be by e-mail attachment or IBM-formatted 3.5" diskette; alternatively, by mail, typed or handwritten.

Photos and graphics: Submit photos and slides preferably as TIFF (*.tif) images or as high resolution JPEG (*.jpg) images in e-mail attachment, on 3.5" diskette or CD, or by mail. All photos, slides, and graphics will be returned.

Send all materials other than seasonal field reports to Kayleen A. Niyo at Kay@KayNiyo.com or by mail to 25100 Sunset Lane, Evergreen, CO 80439. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue (Vol. 1), April 1 for spring issue (2), July 1 for summer issue (3), October 1 for fall issue (4)**. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

IOU NEWS: Paul Hertzelt, Editor, 1432 East State Street, Mason City, IA 50401 (phertzelt@rconnect.com)

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UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION: Fall 2004: 24–26 September 2004, Wickiup Hill Natural Area along the Cedar River northwest of Cedar Rapids, IA; Spring 2005: 13–16 May 2005, Indianola, IA.

DESIGN: Lynn Ekblad, Ames, IA

GRAPHICS: Richard Beachler, Boone, IA



*King Rail at Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Coralville Res., Johnson Co., IA
Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA. First sighting in IA since 1999.*

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